

THE
W O R K S
OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
WITH
AN ESSAY
ON
HIS LIFE AND GENIUS.

BY ARTHUR MURPHY, ESQ.

A NEW EDITION,
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A

DISSERTATION

UPON THE

GREEK COMEDY,

TRANSLATED FROM BRUMOY*.

ADVERTISEMENT.

I CONCLUDE this work according to my promise, with an account of the Comic Theatre, and entreat the reader, whether a favourer or an enemy of the ancient Drama, not to pass his censure upon the authors or upon me, without a regular perusal of this whole work. For, though it seems to be composed of pieces of which each may precede or follow without dependence upon the other, yet all the parts, taken together, form a system which would be destroyed by their disjunction. Which way

* Published by Mrs. Lennox in 4to, 1759. To the third volume of this work the following advertisement is prefixed.
" In this volume, the Discourse on the Greek Comedy, and the General Conclusion, are translated by the celebrated author of the Rambler. The Comedy of the Birds, and that of Peace, by a young Gentleman. The Comedy of the Frogs, by the learned and ingenious Dr. Gregory Sharpe. The Discourse upon the Cyclops, by John Bourrya, Esq. The Cyclops, by Dr. Grainger, author of the translation of Tibullus." E.

shall we come at the knowledge of the ancients' shows, but by comparing together all that is left of them? The value and necessity of this comparison determined me to publish all, or to publish nothing. Besides, the reflections on each piece, and on the general taste of antiquity, which, in my opinion, are not without importance, have a kind of obscure gradation, which I have carefully endeavoured to preserve, and of which the thread would be lost by him who should slightly glance sometimes upon one piece, and sometimes upon another. It is a structure which I have endeavoured to make as near to regularity as I could, and which must be seen in its full extent and in proper succession. The reader who skips here and there over the book, might make a hundred objections which are either anticipated, or answered in those pieces which he might have overlooked. I have laid such stress upon the connection of the parts of this work, that I have declined to exhaust the subject, and have suppressed many of my notions, that I might leave the judicious reader to please himself by forming such conclusions as I supposed him like to discover, as well as myself. I am not here attempting to prejudice the reader by an apology either for the ancients, or my own manner. I have not claimed a right of obliging others to determine, by my opinion, the degrees of esteem which I think due to the authors of the Athenian Stage; nor do I think that their reputation in the present time, ought to depend upon my mode of thinking or expressing my thoughts, which I leave entirely to the judgment of the publick.

DISSSERTATION, &c.

I. I was in doubt a long time, whether I should meddle at all with the Greek comedy, both, because the pieces which remain are very few, the licentiousness of Aristophanes, their author, is exorbitant, and it is very difficult to draw from the performances of a single poet a just idea of Greek comedy. Besides, it seemed that tragedy was sufficient to employ all my attention, that I might give a complete representation of that kind of writing, which was most esteemed by the Athenians and the wiser Greeks *, particularly by Socrates, who set no value upon comedy or comick actors. But the very name of that drama, which in polite ages, and above all others in our own, has been so much advanced, that it has become equal to tragedy, if not preferable, incline me to think that I may be partly reproached with an imperfect work, if, after having gone as deep as I could into the nature of Greek tragedy, I did not at least sketch a draught of the comedy.

Reasons why Aristophanes may be reviewed without translating him entirely.

I then considered, that it was not wholly impossible to surmount, at least in part, the difficulties which had stopt me, and to go somewhat farther

* There was a law which forbud any judge of the Areopagus to write comedy.

than the learned writers *, who have published in French some pieces of Aristophanes; not that I pretend to make large translations. The same reasons which have hindered with respect to the more noble parts of the Greek drama, operate with double force upon my present subject. Though ridicule, which is the business of comedy, be not less uniform in all times, than the passions which are moved by tragick compositions; yet, if diversity of manners may sometimes disguise the passions themselves, how much greater change will be made in jocularities? The truth is, that they are so much changed by the course of time, that pleasantry and ridicule become dull and flat much more easily than the pathetick becomes ridiculous.

That which is commonly known by the term jocular and comick, is nothing but a turn of expression, an airy phantom, that must be caught at a particular point. As we lose this point, we lose the jocularity, and find nothing but dulness in its place. A lucky sally, which has filled a company with laughter, will have no effect in print, because it is shown single and separate from the circumstance which gave it force. Many satirical jests, found in ancient books, have had the same fate; their spirit has evaporated by time, and have left nothing to us but insipidity. None but the most biting passages have preserved their points unblunted.

But, besides this objection, which extends universally to all translations of Aristophanes, and many allusions of which time has deprived us, there

* Madame Dacier, M. Boivin.

are loose expressions thrown out to the populace to raise laughter from corrupt passions, which are unworthy of the curiosity of decent readers, and which ought to rest eternally in proper obscurity. Not every thing in this infancy of comedy was excellent, at least it would not appear excellent at this distance of time, in comparison of compositions of the same kind, which lie before our eyes; and this is reason enough to save me the trouble of translating, and the reader that of perusing. As for that small number of writers who delight in those delicacies, they give themselves very little trouble about translations, except it be to find fault with them; and the majority of people of wit like comedies that may give them pleasure, without much trouble of attention, and are not much disposed to find beauties in that which requires long deductions to find it beautiful. If Helen had not appeared beautiful to the Greeks and Trojans but by force of argument, we had never been told of the Trojan war.

On the other side, Aristophanes is an author more considerable than one would imagine. The History of Greece could not pass over him, when it comes to touch upon the people of Athens; this alone might procure him respect, even when he was not considered as a comick poet. But when his writings are taken into view, we find him the only author from whom may be drawn a just idea of the comedy of his age; and farther, we find in his pieces, that he often makes attacks upon the tragick writers, particularly upon the three chief,

whose valuable remains we have had under examination ; and, what is yet worse, fell sometimes upon the state, and upon the gods themselves.

The chief heads of this discourse. II. These considerations have determined me to follow, in my representation of this writer, the same method which I have taken in several tragick pieces, which is that of giving an exact analysis as far as the matter would allow, from which I deduce four important systems. First, Upon the nature of the comedy of that age, without omitting that of Menander *.

* Menander, an Athenian, son of Diopethes and Hegestrates, was apparently the most eminent of the writers of the new comedy. He had been a scholar of Theophrastus : his passion for the women brought infamy upon him : he was squint-eyed, and very lively. Of the one hundred and eighty comedies, or, according to Suidas, the eighty which he composed, and which are all said to be translated by Terence, we have now only a few fragments remaining. He flourished about the 115th Olympiad, 318 years before the Christian æra. He was drowned as he was bathing in the port of Pireus. I have told in another place, what is said of one Philemon, his antagonist, not so good a poet as himself, but one who often gained the prize. This Philemon was older than him, and was much in fashion in the time of Alexander the Great. He expressed all his wishes in two lines, ' To have health, and fortune, and pleasure, and never to be in debt, is all I desire.' He was very covetous, and was pictured with his fingers hooked, so that he set his comedies at a high price. He lived about a hundred years, some say a hundred and one. Many tales are told of his death ; Valerius Maximus says, that he died with laughing at a little incident : seeing an ass eating his figs, he ordered his servant to drive her away ; the man made no great haste, and the ass eat them all. ' Well done,' says Philemon, ' now give her some wine.' Apuleius and Quintilian placed this writer much below Menander, but give him the second place.

Upon the vices and government of the Athenians. Thirdly, Upon the notion we ought to entertain of Aristophanes, with respect to Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Fourthly, Upon the jest which he makes upon the gods. These things will not be treated in order, as a regular discourse seems to require, but will arise sometimes separately, sometimes together, from the view of each particular comedy, and from the reflections which this free manner of writing will allow. I shall conclude with a short view of the whole, and so finish my design.

III. I shall not repeat here what Madame Dacier, and so many others before her, have collected of all that can be known relating to the history of comedy. Its beginnings are as obscure as those of tragedy, and there is an appearance that we take these two words in a more extensive meaning ; they had both the same original, that is, they began among the festivals of the vintage, and were not distinguished from one another but by a burlesque or serious chorus, which made all the soul and all the body. But, if we give these words a stricter sense, according to the notion which has since been formed, comedy was produced after tragedy, and was in many respects a sequel and imitation of the works of Eschylus. It is in reality nothing more than an action set before the sight, by the same artifice of representation. Nothing is different but the object, which is merely ridicule. This original of true comedy will be easily admitted, if we take the word of Horace, who must have known better than us the true dates of dramatick

works. This poet supports the system which I have endeavoured to establish in the second discourse * so strongly as to amount to demonstrative proof.

Horace † expresses himself thus, “ Thespis is said to have been the first inventor of a species of tragedy, in which he carried about in carts, players smeared with the dregs of wine, of whom some sung and others declaimed.” This was the first attempt both of tragedy and comedy ; for Thespis made use only of one speaker, without the least appearance of dialogue. “ Eschylus afterwards exhibited them with more dignity. He placed them on a stage, somewhat above the ground, covered their faces with masks, put buskins on their feet, dressed them in trailing robes, and made them speak in a more lofty style.” Horace omits invention of dialogue, which we learn from Aristotle ‡. But, however, it may be well enough inferred from the following words of Horace ; this completion is mentioned while he speaks of Eschylus, and therefore to Eschylus it must be ascribed : “ Then first appeared the old comedy, with great success in its beginning.” Thus we see that the Greek comedy arose after tragedy, and by consequence tragedy was its parent. It was formed in imitation of Eschylus, the inventor of the tragick drama ; or, to go yet higher into antiquity, had its original from Homer, who was the guide of Eschylus. For, if we credit Aristotle §, comedy had its birth from the Margetes, a satirical poem of Homer, and tragedy

* Greek Theatre, part I. vol. I.

† Hor. Poet. v. 275,

‡ Poet. ch. 4.

§ Poet. ch. 4,

from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Thus the design and artifice of comedy were drawn from Who is author Homer and Eschylus. This will appear less surprising, since the ideas of the human mind are always gradual, and arts are seldom invented but by imitation. The first idea contains the seed of the second ; this second, expanding itself, gives birth to a third ; and so on. Such is the progress of the mind of man ; it proceeds in its productions step by step, in the same manner as nature multiplies her works by imitating, or repeating her own act, when she seems most to run into variety. In this manner it was that comedy had its birth, its increase, its improvement, its perfection, and its diversity.

IV. But the question is, who was the happy author of that imitation, and that show, whether only one like Eschylus of tragedy, or whether they were several ? for neither Horace, nor any before him, explained this *. This poet only quotes three writers

* ‘ The alterations which have been made in tragedy were perceptible, and the authors of them unknown ; but comedy has lain in obscurity, being not cultivated; like tragedy, from the time of its original : for it was long before the magistrates began to give comick choruses. It was first exhibited by actors, who played voluntarily, without orders of the magistrates. From the time that it began to take some settled form, we know its authors, but are not informed who first used masks, added prologues, increased the numbers of the actors, and joined all the other things which now belong to it. The first that thought of forming comick fables, were Epicharmus and Phormys, and consequently this manner came from Sicily : Crates was the first Athenian that adopted it, and forsook the practice of gross raillery that prevailed before.’ Aristot. ch. 5. Crates flourished in the 82d Olympiad, 450 years before our æra, twelve or thirteen years before Aristophanes.

who had reputation in the old Comedy, Eupolis *, Cratinus †, and Aristophanes, of whom he says, ‘That they, and others who wrote in the same way, reprehended the faults of particular persons with excessive liberty.’ These are probably the poets of the greatest reputation, though they were not the first, and we know the names of many others ‡. Among these three we may be sure that Aristophanes had the greatest character, since not only the king of Persia || expressed a high esteem of him to the Grecian ambassadors, as of a man extremely useful to his country, and Plato § rated him so high, as to say, that the graces resided in his bosom ; but likewise because he is the only writer of whom any comedies have made their way down to us, through the confusion of times. There are not indeed any proofs that he was the inventor of comedy, properly so called, especially since he had not only predecessors who wrote in the same kind, but it is

* Eupolis was an Athenian ; his death, which we shall mention presently, is represented differently by authors, who almost all agree that he was drowned. Elian adds an incident which deserves to be mentioned : he says (Book X. of Animals), that one Augeas of Eleusis, made Eupolis a present of a fine mastiff, who was so faithful to his master as to worry to death a slave who was carrying away some of his comedies. He adds, that when the poet died at Egene, his dog staid by his tomb till he perished by grief and hunger.

† Cratinus of Athens, who was son of Callimedes, died at the age of ninety-seven. He composed twenty comedies, of which nine had the prize : he was a daring writer, but a cowardly warrior.

‡ Hertelius has collected the sentences of fifty Greek poets of the different ages of comedy.

|| Interlude of the second act of the comedy, intitled The Acharniens.

§ Epigram attributed to Plato.

at least a sign, that he had contributed more than any other to bring comedy to the perfection in which he left it. We shall, therefore, not inquire farther, whether regular comedy was the work of a single mind, which seems yet to be unsettled, or of several contemporaries, such as these which Horace quotes. We must distinguish three forms which comedy wore, in consequence of the genius of the writers, or of the laws of the magistrates, and the change of the government of many into that of few.

V. That comedy *, which Horace calls the ancient, and which, according to his account, was after Eschylus, retained something of its original state, and of the licentiousness which it practised, while it was yet without regularity, and uttered loose jokes and abuse upon the passers-by from the cart of Thespis. Though it was now properly modelled, as might have been worthy of a great theatre and a numerous audience, and deserved the name of a regular comedy, it was not yet much nearer to decency. It was a representation of real actions, and exhibited the dress, the motions, and the air, as far as could be done in a mask, of any one who was thought proper to be sacrificed to publick scorn. In a city so free, or to say better, so licentious as Athens was at that time, nobody was spared, not even the chief magistrate, nor the very judges, by whose voice comedies were allowed or prohibited. The insolence of those performances reached to open im-

The old, middle, and new comedy.

* This history of the three ages of comedy, and their different characters, is taken in part from the valuable fragments of Platonius.

piety, and sport was made equally with men and gods *. These are the features by which the greatest part of the compositions of Aristophanes will be known. In which it may be particularly observed, that not the least appearance of praise will be found, and therefore certainly no trace of flattery or servility.

This licentiousness of the poets, to which in some sort Socrates fell a sacrifice, at last was restrained by a law. For the government, which was before shared by all the inhabitants, was now confined to a settled number of citizens. It was ordered, that no man's name should be mentioned on the stage ; but poetical malignity was not long in finding the secret of defeating the purpose of the law, and of making themselves ample compensation for the restraint laid upon authors, by the necessity of inventing false names. They set themselves to work upon known and real characters, so that they had now the advantage of giving a more exquisite gratification to the vanity of poets, and the malice of spectators. One had the refined pleasure of setting others to guess, and the other that of guessing right by naming the masks. When pictures are so like, that the name is not wanted, nobody inscribes it. The consequence of the law, therefore, was nothing more than to make that done with delicacy, which was done grossly before ; and the art, which was expected would be confined within the limits of duty, was only partly transgressed with more ingenuity. Of this Aristophanes, who was comprehended in this law, gives us good examples

* It will be shown how and in what sense this was allowed.

in some of his poems. Such was that which was afterwards called the middle comedy.

The new comedy, or that which followed, was again an excellent refinement, prescribed by the magistrates, who, as they had before forbid the use of real names, forbade afterwards real subjects, and the train of choruses * too much given to abuse : so that the poets saw themselves reduced to the necessity of bringing imaginary names and subjects upon the stage, which at once purified and enriched the theatre ; for comedy from that time was no longer a fury armed with torches, but a pleasing and innocent mirror of human life.

Chacun peint avec art dans ce nouveau miroir
 S'y vit avec plaisir, ou crut ne s'y pas voir !
 L'avare des premiers rit du tableau fidelle
 D'un avare souvent tracé sur son modelle ;
 Et mille fois un fat finement exprimé
 Méconnut le portrait sur lui-même formé †.

The comedy of Menander and Terence is, in propriety of speech, the fine comedy. I do not repeat all this after so many writers but just to recall it to memory, and to add to what they have said, something which they have omitted, a singular effect of publick edicts appearing in the successive progress of the art. A naked history of poets and of poetry, such as has been often given, is a mere body without soul, unless it be enlivened with an account of the birth, progress, and perfection of the art, and of the causes by which they were produced.

VI. To omit nothing essential which concerns

* Perhaps the chorus was forbid in the middle age of the comedy. Platonius seems to say so.

† Despreaux Art. Poet. chant. 8.

The Latin this part, we shall say a word of the comedy. Latin comedy. When the arts passed from Greece to Rome, comedy took its turn among the rest: but the Romans applied themselves only to the new species, without chorus or personal abuse; though perhaps they might have played some translations of the old or the middle comedy, for Pliny gives an account of one which was represented in his own time. But the Roman comedy, which was modelled upon the last species of the Greek, hath nevertheless its different ages, according as its authors were rough or polished. The pieces of *Livius Andronicus**, more ancient and less refined than those of the writers who learned the art from him, may be said to compose the first age, or the old Roman comedy and tragedy. To him you must join *Nevius* his contemporary, and *Ennius*, who lived some years after him. The second age comprises *Pacuvius*, *Cecilius*, *Accius*, and *Plautus*, unless it shall be thought better to reckon *Plautus* with *Terence*, to make the third and highest age of the Latin comedy, which may properly be called the new comedy, especially with regard to *Terence*, who was the friend of *Lelius*, and the faithful copier of *Menander*.

But the Romans, without troubling themselves with this order of succession, distinguished their comedies by the dresses† of the players. The robe, called *prætexta*, with large borders of purple, being the formal dress of magistrates in their dignity, and in the exercise of their office, the actors, who had this

* The year of Rome 514, the first year of the 135th Olympiad.

† *Prætextæ*, *Togatæ*, *Tabernariae*.

dress, gave its name to the comedy. This is the same with that called *Trabeata* *, from *Trabea*, the dress of the consuls in peace, and the generals in triumph. The second species introduced the senators not in great offices, but as private men ; this was called *Toges*, from *Togata*. The last species was named *Tabernaria*, from the tunick, or the common dress of the people, or rather from the mean houses which were painted on the scene. There is no need of mentioning the farces, which took their name and original from *Atella*, an ancient town of Campania in Italy, because they differed from the low comedy only by greater licentiousness ; nor of those which were called *Palliates*, from the Greek, a cloak, in which the Greek characters were dressed upon the Roman stage, because that habit only distinguished the nation, not the dignity or character, like those which have been mentioned before. To say truth, these are but trifling distinctions ; for, as we shall show in the following pages, comedy may be more usefully and judiciously distinguished, by the general nature of its subjects. As to the Romans, whether they had, or had not, reason for these names, they have left us so little upon the subject which is come down to us, that we need not trouble ourselves with a distinction which affords us no solid satisfaction. Plautus and Terence, the only authors of whom we are in possession, give us a fuller notion of the real nature of their comedy, with respect at least to their own times, than can be received from names and terms, from which we have no real exemplification.

* Suet. de Claris Grammat says, that C. Gelissus, librarian to Augustus, was the author of it.

VII. Not to go too far out of our way, let us return to Aristophanes, the only poet in whom we can now find the Greek comedy. He is the single writer, whom the violence of time has in some degree spared, after having buried in darkness, and almost in forgetfulness, so many great men, of whom we have nothing but the names and a few fragments, and such slight memorials as are scarcely sufficient to defend them against the enemies of the honour of antiquity ; yet these memorials are like the last glimmer of the setting sun, which scarce affords us a weak and fading light : yet from this glimmer we must endeavour to collect rays of sufficient strength to form a picture of the Greek comedy approaching as near as possible to the truth.

Of the personal character of Aristophanes little is known ; what account we can give of it must therefore be had from his comedies. It can scarcely be said with certainty of what country he was : the invectives of his enemies so often called in question his qualification as a citizen, that they have made it doubtful. Some said, he was of Rhodes, others of Egena, a little island in the neighbourhood, and all agreed that he was a stranger. As to himself, he said that he was the son of Philip, and born in the Cydathenian quarter ; but he confessed that some of his fortune was in Egena, which was probably the original seat of his family. He was, however, formally declared a citizen of Athens, upon evidence, whether good or bad, upon a decisive judgment, and this for having made his judges merry by an application of a saying of Telemachus*, of which

* Homer, Odyssey.

this is the sense: “ I am, as my mother tells me, the son of Philip; for my own part, I know little of the matter, for what child knows his own father?” This piece of merriment did him as much good, as Archias received from the oration of Cicero*, who said that that poet was a Roman citizen. An honour which, if he had not inherited by birth, he deserved for his genius.

Aristophanes† flourished in the age of the great men of Greece, particularly of Socrates and Euripides, both of whom he outlived. He made a great figure during the whole Peloponnesian war, not merely as a comick poet by whom the people were diverted, but as the censor of the government, as a man kept in pay by the state to reform it, and almost to act the part of the arbitrator of the publick. A particular account of his comedies will best let us into his personal character as a poet, and into the nature of his genius, which is what we are most interested to know. It will, however, not be amiss to prepossess our readers a little by the judgments that had been passed upon him by the criticks of our own time, without forgetting one of the ancients that deserves great respect.

VIII. “ Aristophanes,” says father Rapin, “ is not exact in the contrivance of his fables; his fictions are not probable; he brings real characters upon the stage too coarsely and too openly. Socrates, whom he ridicules so much in his plays, had a more delicate

Aristophanes censured and praised.

* *Orat. pro Archia Poeta.*

† In the 85th year of the Olympiad, 437 before our era, and 517 of the foundation of Rome.

turn of burlesque than himself, and had his merriment without his impudence. It is true, that Aristophanes wrote amidst the confusion and licentiousness of the old comedy, and he was well acquainted with the humour of the Athenians, to whom uncommon merit always gave disgust, and therefore he made the eminent men of his time the subject of his merriment. But the too great desire which he had to delight the people by exposing worthy characters upon the stage, made him at the same time an unworthy man ; and the turn of his genius to ridicule was disfigured and corrupted by the indelicacy and outrageousness of his manners. After all, his pleasantry consists chiefly in new-coined puffy language. The dish of twenty-six syllables, which he gives in his last scene of his Female Orators, would please few tastes in our days. His language is sometimes obscure, perplexed, and vulgar, and his frequent play with words, his oppositions of contradictory terms, his mixture of tragick and comick, of serious and burlesque, are all flat ; and his jocularity, if you examine it to the bottom, is all false. Menander is diverting in a more elegant manner ; his style is pure, clear, elevated, and natural ; he persuades like an orator, and instructs like a philosopher ; and if we may venture to judge upon the fragments which remain, it appears that his pictures of civil life are pleasing, that he makes every one speak according to his character, that every man may apply his pictures of life to himself, because he always follows nature, and feels for the pérsonages which he brings upon the stage. To conclude, Plutarch, in his comparison of these

authors, says, that the Muse of Aristophanes is an abandoned prostitute, and that of Menander a modest woman."

It is evident that this whole character is taken from Plutarch. Let us now go on with this remark of father Rapin, since we have already spoken of the Latin comedy, of which he gives us a description.

" With respect to the two Latin comick poets, Plautus is ingenious in his designs, happy in his conceptions, and fruitful of invention. He has, however, according to Horace, some low jocularities, and those smart sayings, which made the vulgar laugh, made him be pitied by men of higher taste. It is true, that some of his jests are extremely good, but others likewise are very bad. To this every man is exposed, who is too much determined to make sallies of merriment; they endeavour to raise that laughter by hyperboles, which would not arise by a just representation of things. Plautus is not quite so regular as Terence in the scheme of his designs, or in the distribution of his acts, but he is more simple in his plot; for the fables of Terence are commonly complex, as may be seen in his *Andrea*, which contains two amours. It was imputed as a fault to Terence, that, to bring more action upon the stage, he made one Latin comedy out of two Greek; but then Terence unravels his plot more naturally than Plautus, which Plautus did more naturally than Aristophanes; and though Cæsar calls Terence but one half of Menander, because, though he had softness and delicacy, there was in him some want of sprightliness and strength; yet he has written in a manner so natural and so

judicious, that, though he was then only a copy, he is now an original. No author has ever had a more exact sense of pure nature. Of Cecilius, since we have only a few fragments, I shall say nothing. All that we know of him is told us by Varrus, that he was happy in the choice of subjects."

Rapin omits many others for the same reason, that we have not enough of their works to qualify us for judges. While we are upon this subject, it will perhaps not displease the reader to see what that critick's opinion is of Lopes de Vega and Moliere. It will appear, that, with respect to Lopes de Vega, he is rather too profuse of praise: that in speaking of Moliere, he is too parsimonious. This piece will, however, be of use to our design, when we shall examine to the bottom what it is that ought to make the character of comedy.

" No man has ever had a greater genius for comedy than Lopes de Vega the Spaniard. He had a fertility of wit, joined with great beauty of conception, and a wonderful readiness of composition; for he has written more than three hundred comedies. His name alone gave réputation to his pieces; for his reputation was so well established, that a work, which came from his hands, was sure to claim the approbation of the public. He had a mind too extensive to be subjected to rules, or restrained by limits. For that reason he gave himself up to his own genius, on which he could always depend with confidence. When he wrote, he consulted no other laws than the taste of his auditors, and regulated his manner more by the success of his work than by the rules of reason. Thus he discarded all scruples of unity, and all the super-

stitions of probability." (This is certainly not said with a design to praise him, and must be connected with that which immediately follows.) " But as for the most part he endeavours at too much jocularity, and carries ridicule to too much refinement; his conceptions are often rather happy than just, and rather wild than natural; for, by subtilizing merriment too far, it becomes too nice to be true, and his beauties lose their power of striking by being too delicate and acute."

" Among us, nobody has carried ridicule in comedy farther than Moliere. Our ancient comick writers brought no characters higher than servants, to make sport upon the theatre; but we are diverted upon the theatre of Moliere by marquises and people of quality. Others have exhibited in comedy no species of life above that of a citizen; but Moliere shows us all Paris, and the court. He is the only man amongst us, who has laid open those features of nature by which he is exactly marked, and may be accurately known. The beauties of his pictures are so natural, that they are felt by persons of the least discernment, and his power of pleasantry received half its force from his power of copying. His *Misanthrope* is, in my opinion, the most complete, and likewise the most singular character that has ever appeared upon the stage: but the disposition of his comedies is always defective some way or another. This is all which we can observe in general upon comedy."

Such are the thoughts of one of the most refined judges of works of genius, from which, though they are not all oraculous, some advantages may be drawn, as they always make some approaches to truth.

Madame Dacier*, having her mind full of the merit of Aristophanes, expresses herself in this manner: "No man had ever more discernment than him, in finding out the ridiculous, nor a more ingenious manner of showing it to others. His remarks are natural and easy, and, what very rarely can be found, with great copiousness he has great delicacy. To say all at once, the Attick wit, of which the ancients made such boast, appears more in Aristophanes than in any other that I know of in antiquity. But what is most of all to be admired in him is, that he is always so much master of the subject before him, that, without doing any violence to himself, he finds a way to introduce naturally things which at first appeared most distant from his purpose; and even the most quick and unexpected of his desultory sallies appear the necessary consequence of the foregoing incidents. This is that art which sets the dialogues of Plato above imitation, which we must consider as so many dramatick pieces, which are equally entertaining by the action and by the dialogue. The style of Aristophanes is no less pleasing than his fancy; for, besides its clearness, its vigour, and its sweetness, there is in it a certain harmony so delightful to the ear, that there is no pleasure equal to that of reading it. When he applies himself to vulgar mediocrity of style, he descends without meanness; when he attempts the sublime, he is elevated without obscurity; and no man has ever had the art of blending all the different kinds of writing so equally together. After having studied all that is left us of Grecian learning, if we have not read Aristo-

* Preface to Plautus. Paris, 1684.

phanes, we cannot yet know all the charms and beauties of that language."

IX. This is a pompous elogium: but let us suspend our opinion, and hear that of Plutarch, who, being an ancient, well deserves our attention, at least after we have heard the moderns before him. This is then the sum of his judgment concerning Aristophanes and Menander. To Menander he gives the preference, without allowing much competition. He objects to Aristophanes, that he carries all his thoughts beyond nature, that he writes rather to the crowd than to men of character; that he affects a style obscure and licentious; tragical, pompous, and mean, sometimes serious, and sometimes ludicrous, even to puerility; that he makes none of his personages speak according to any distinct character, so that in his scenes the son cannot be known from the father, the citizen from the boor, the hero from the shopkeeper, or the divine from the serving-man. Whereas the diction of Menander, which is always uniform and pure, is very justly adapted to different characters, rising, when it is necessary, to vigorous and sprightly comedy, yet without transgressing the proper limits, or losing sight of nature, in which Menander, says Plutarch, has attained a perfection to which no other writer has arrived. For what man, besides himself, has ever found the art of making a diction equally suitable to women and children, to old and young, to divinities and heroes? Now Menander has found this happy secret, in the equality and flexibility of his diction, which, though always the same, is nevertheless different upon different occasions; like a current of

Plutarch's sentiment upon Aristophanes and Menander.

clear water (to keep closely to the thoughts of Plutarch), which running through banks differently turned, complies with all their turns backward and forward without changing any thing of its nature or its purity. Plutarch mentions it as a part of the merit of Menander; that he began very young, and was stopped only by old age, at a time when he would have produced the greatest wonders, if death had not prevented him. This, joined to a reflection, which he makes as he returns to Aristophanes, shows that Aristophanes continued a long time to display his powers: for his poetry, says Plutarch, is a strumpet that affects sometimes the airs of a prude, but whose impudence cannot be forgiven by the people, and whose affected modesty is despised by men of decency. Menander, on the contrary, always shows himself a man agreeable and witty, a companion desirable upon the stage, at table, and in gay assemblies; an extract of all the treasures of Greece, who deserves always to be read, and always to please. His irresistible power of persuasion, and the reputation which he has had, of being the best master of language of Greece, sufficiently shows the delightfulness of his style. Upon this article of Menander, Plutarch does not know how to make an end: he says, that he is the delight of philosophers fatigued with study; that they use his works as a meadow enamelled with flowers, where a purer air gratifies the sense; that, notwithstanding the powers of the other comick poets of Athens, Menander has always been considered as possessing a salt peculiar to himself, drawn from the same waters that gave birth to Venus. That, on the contrary, the salt of Aristophanes is

bitter, keen, coarse, and corrosive; that one cannot tell whether his dexterity, which has been so much boasted, consists not more in the characters than in the expression, for he is charged with playing often upon words, with affecting antithetical allusions; that he has spoiled the copies which he endeavoured to take after nature; that artifice in his plays is wickedness, and simplicity brutishness; that his jocularities ought to raise hisses rather than laughter; that his amours have more impudence than gaiety; and that he has not so much written for men of understanding, as for minds blackened with envy and corrupted with debauchery.

X. After such a character there seems no need of going further; and one would think, that it would be better to bury for ever the memory of so hateful a writer, that makes us so poor a recompense for the loss of Menander, who cannot be recalled. But, without showing any mercy to the indecent or malicious sallies of Aristophanes, any more than to Plautus his imitator, or at least the inheritor of his genius, may it not be allowed us to do, with respect to him, what, if I mistake not, Lucretius* did to Ennius, from whose muddy verses he gathered jewels? *Enni de stercore gemmas.*

Besides, we must not believe that Plutarch, who lived more than four ages after Menander, and more than five after Aristophanes, has passed so exact a judgment upon both, but that it may be fit to re-examine it. Plato, the contemporary of Aristophanes, thought very differently, at least of his genius; for, in his piece called 'The Entertain-

The justification of Aristophanes.

* Brumoy has mistaken Lucretius for Virgil.

ment, he gives that poet a distinguished place, and makes him speak, according to his character, with Socrates himself; from which, by the way, it is apparent, that this dialogue of Plato was composed before the time that Aristophanes wrote his *Clouds* against Socrates. Plato is likewise said to have sent a copy of Aristophanes to Dionysius the tyrant, with advice to read it diligently, if he would attain a complete judgment of the state of the Athenian republic.

Many other scholars have thought, that they might depart somewhat from the opinion of Plutarch. Frischlinus, for example, one of the commentators upon Aristophanes, though he justly allows his taste to be less pure than that of Menander, has yet undertaken his defence against the outrageous censure of the ancient critick. In the first place, he condemns without mercy his ribaldry and obscenity. But this part, so worthy of contempt, and written only for the lower people, according to the remark of Boivin, bad as it is, after all is not the chief part which is left of Aristophanes. I will not say with Frischlinus, that Plutarch seems in this to contradict himself, and in reality commends the poet, when he accuses him of having adapted his language to the stage; by the stage, in this place, he meant the theatre of Farces, on which low mirth and buffoonery was exhibited. This plea of Frischlinus is a mere cavil; and though the poet had obtained his end, which was to divert a corrupted populace, he would not have been less a bad man, nor less a despicable poet, notwithstanding the excuse of his defender. To be able in the highest degree to divert fools

and libertines, will not make a poet: it is not, therefore, by this defence that we must justify the character of Aristophanes. The depraved taste of the crowd, who once drove away Cratinus and his company, because the scenes had not low buffoonery enough for their taste, will not justify Aristophanes, since Menander found a way of changing the taste by giving a sort of comedy, not indeed so modest as Plutarch represents it, but less licentious than before. Nor is Aristophanes better justified by the reason which he himself offers, when he says, that he exhibited debauchery upon the stage, not to corrupt the morals, but to mend them. The sight of gross faults is rather a poison than a remedy.

The apologist has forgot one reason, which appears to me essential to a just account. As far as we can judge by appearance, Plutarch had in his hands all the plays of Aristophanes, which were at least fifty in number. In these he saw more licentiousness than has come to our hands, though in the eleven that are still remaining, there is much more than could be wished.

Plutarch censures him, in the second place, for playing upon words; and against this charge Frischlinus defends him with less skill. It is impossible to exemplify this in French. But after all, this part is so little, that it deserved not so severe a reprehension, especially since amongst those sayings, there are some so mischievously malignant, that they became proverbial, at least by the sting of their malice, if not by the delicacy of their wit. One example will be sufficient: speaking of the tax gatherers, or the excisemen of Athens, he crushes them at once by observing,

non quod essent τάραχαι sed λαμιαι. The word *lamiae* signified *walking spirits*, which, according to the vulgar notion, devoured men ; this makes the spirit of the sarcasm against the tax-gatherers. This cannot be rendered in our language ; but if any thing as good had been said in France on the like occasion, it would have lasted too long, and, like many other sayings amongst us, been too well received. The best is, that Plutarch himself confesses that it was extremely applauded.

The third charge is, a mixture of tragick and comick style. This accusation is certainly true ; Aristophanes often gets into the buskin : but we must examine upon what occasion. He does not take upon him the character of a tragick writer ; but, having remarked that his trick of parody was always well received by a people who liked to laugh at that for which they had been just weeping, he is eternally using the same craft ; and there is scarce any tragedy or striking passage known by memory by the Athenians, which he does not turn into merriment, by throwing over it a dress of ridicule and burlesque, which is done sometimes by changing or transposing the words, and sometimes by an unexpected application of the whole sentence. These are the shreds of tragedy, in which he arrays the comick muse, to make her still more comick. Cratinus had before done the same thing ; and we know that he made a comedy called *Ulysses*, to burlesque Homer and his *Odyssey* ; which shows, that the wits and poets are, with respect to one another, much the same at all times, and that it was at Athens as here. I will prove this system by facts, particularly with respect to

the merriment of Aristophanes upon our three celebrated tragedians. This being the case, the mingled style of Aristophanes will, perhaps, not deserve so much censure as Plutarch has vented. We have no need of the Travesty of Virgil, nor the parodies of our own time, nor of the Lutrin of Boileau, to show us that this medley may have its merit upon particular occasions.

The same may be said in general of his obscurity, his meannesses, and his high flights, and of all the seeming inequality of style, which puts Plutarch in a rage. These censures can never be just upon a poet, whose style has always been allowed to be perfectly Attick, and of an Atticism which made him extremely delightful to the lovers of the Athenian taste. Plutarch, - perhaps, rather means to blame the choruses, of which the language is sometimes elevated, sometimes burlesque, always very poetical, and therefore in appearance not suitable to comedy. But the chorus, which had been borrowed from tragedy, was then all the fashion, particularly for pieces of satire, and Aristophanes admitted them like the other poets of the old, and perhaps of the middle comedy; whereas Menander suppressed them, not so much in compliance with his own judgment, as in obedience to the publick edicts. It is not, therefore, this mixture of tragick and comick that will place Aristophanes below Menander.

The fifth charge is, that he kept no distinction of character; that, for example, he makes women speak like orators, and orators like slaves: but it appears by the characters which he ridicules, that this objection falls of itself. It is sufficient to say, that a poet who painted, not imaginary characters, but

real persons, men well known, citizens whom he called by their names, and showed in dresses like their own, and masks resembling their faces, whom he branded in the sight of a whole city, extremely haughty and full of derision ; it is sufficient to say, that such a poet could never be supposed to miss his characters. The applause, which his licentiousness produced, is too good a justification ; besides, if he had not succeeded, he exposed himself to the fate of Eupolis, who, in a comedy called the Drowned Man, having imprudently pulled to pieces particular persons, more powerful than himself, was laid hold of, and drowned more effectually than those he had drowned upon the open stage.

The condemnation of the poignancy of Aristophanes, as having too much acrimony, is better founded. Such was the turn of a species of comedy, in which all licentiousness was allowed ; in a nation which made every thing a subject of laughter, in its jealousy of immoderate liberty, and its enmity to all appearance of rule and superiority ; for the genius of independency naturally produces a kind of satire more keen than delicate, as may be easily observed in most of the inhabitants of islands. If we do not say with Longinus, that a popular government kindles eloquence, and that a lawful monarchy stifles it ; at least it is easy to discover by the event, that eloquence in different governments takes a different appearance. In repubicks it is more sprightly and violent, and in monarchies more insinuating and soft. The same thing may be said of ridicule : it follows the cast of genius, as genius follows that of government. Thus the republican raillery, particularly of the age which we are now

considering, must have been rougher than that of the age which followed it, for the same reason that Horace is more delicate, and Lucilius more pointed. A dish of satire was always a delicious treat to human malignity ; but that dish was differently seasoned, as the manners were polished more or less. By polished manners I mean that good-breeding, that art of reserve and self-restraint, which is the consequence of dependence. If one was to determine the preference due to one of those kinds of pleasantry, of which both have their value, there would not need a moment's hesitation, every voice would join in favour of the softer, yet without contempt of that which is rough. Menander will, therefore, be preferred, but Aristophanes will not be despised, especially since he was the first who quitted that wild practice of satirising at liberty right or wrong, and by a comedy of another cast made way for the manner of Menander, more agreeable yet, and less dangerous. There is yet another distinction to be made between the acrimony of the one, and the softness of the other ; the works of the one are acrimonious, and of the other soft, because the one exhibited personal, and the other general characters ; which leaves us still at liberty to examine, if these different designs might not be executed with equal delicacy.

We shall know this by a view of the particulars ; in this place we say only that the reigning taste, or the love of striking likenesses, might justify Aristophanes for having turned, as Plutarch says, art into malignity, simplicity into brutality, merriment into farce, and amour into impudence ; if in any

age a poet could be excused for painting publick folly and vice in their true colours.

There is a motive of interest at the bottom which disposed Elian, Plutarch, and many others, to condemn this poet without appeal. Socrates, who is said to have been destroyed by a poetical attack, at the instigation of two wretches*, has too many friends among good men, to have pardon granted to so horrid a crime. This has filled them with an implacable hatred against Aristophanes, which is mingled with the spirit of philosophy, a spirit, wherever it comes, more dangerous than any other. A common enemy will confess some good qualities in his adversary; but a philosopher, made partial by philosophy, is never at rest till he has totally destroyed him who has hurt the most tender part of his heart; that is, has disturbed him in his adherence to some character, which, like that of Socrates, takes possession of the mind. The mind is the freest part of man, and the most tender of its liberties: possessions, life, and reputation, may be in another's power, but opinion is always independent. If any man can obtain that gentle influence by which he ingratiates himself with the understanding, and makes a sect in a commonwealth, his followers will sacrifice themselves for him, and nobody will be pardoned that dares to attack him justly or unjustly, because that truth, real or imaginary, which he maintained, is now become an idol. Time will do nothing for the extinction of

* It is not certain, that Aristophanes did procure the death of Socrates; but, however, he is certainly criminal for having, in the Clouds, accused him publickly of impiety.

this hatred ; it will be propagated from age to age ; and there is no hope that Aristophanes will ever be treated with tenderness by the disciples of Plato, who made Socrates his hero. Every body else may, perhaps, confess, that Aristophanes, though in one instance a bad man, may nevertheless be a good poet ; but distinctions, like these, will not be admitted by prejudice and passion, and one or other dictates all characters, whether good or bad.

As I add my own reasons, such as they are, for or against Aristophanes, to those of Frischlinus his defender, I must not omit one thing which he has forgot, and which, perhaps, without taking in the rest, put Plutarch out of humour, which is that perpetual farce which goes through all the comedies of Aristophanes, like the character of Harlequin on the Italian theatre. What kind of personages are clouds, frogs, wasps, and birds? Plutarch, used to a comick stage of a very different appearance, must have thought them strange things ; and yet stranger must they appear to us, who have a newer kind of comedy, with which the Greeks were unacquainted. This is what our poet may be charged with, and what may be proved beyond refutation. This charge comprises all the rest, and against this I shall not pretend to justify him. It would be of no use to say, that Aristophanes wrote for an age that required shows which filled the eye, and grotesque paintings in satirical performances ; that the crowds of spectators, which sometimes neglected Cratinus to the long Aristophanes, obliged him more and more to comply with the ruling taste, lest he should lose the publick favour by pictures more de-

licate and less striking ; that in a state, where it was considered as policy to lay open every thing that had the appearance of ambition, singularity, or knavery, comedy was become a haranguer, a reformer, and a publick counsellor, from whom the people learned to take care of their most valuable interests ; and that this comedy, in the attempt to lead and to please the people, claimed a right to the strongest touches of eloquence, and had likewise the power of personal painting peculiar to herself. All these reasons, and many others, would disappear immediately, and my mouth would be stopped with a single word, with which every body would agree : my antagonist would tell me, that such an age was to be pitied, and passing on from age to age, till he came to our own, he would conclude flatly, that we are the only possessors of common sense ; a determination with which the French are too much reproached, and which overthrows all the prejudice in favour of antiquity. At the sight of so many happy touches, which one cannot help admiring in Aristophanes, a man might, perhaps, be inclined to lament that such a genius was thrown into an age of fools : but what age has been without them ? And have not we ourselves reason to fear, lest posterity should judge of Moliere and his age, as we judge of Aristophanes ? Menander altered the taste, and was applauded in Athens ; but it was after Athens was changed. Terence imitated him at Rome, and obtained the preference over Plautus, though Cæsar called him but a demi-Menander, because he appears to want that spirit and vivacity which he calls the *vis comica*. We are now weary of the manner

of Menander and Terence, and leave them for Moliere, who appears like a new star in a new course. Who can answer, that in such an interval of time as has past between these four writers, there will not arise another author, or another taste, that may bring Moliere, in his turn, into neglect? Without going further, our neighbours, the English, think he wants force and fire. Whether they are right, or no, is another question; all that I mean to advance is, that we are to fix it as a conclusion, that comick authors must grow obsolete with the modes of life, if we admit any one age, or any one climate, for the sovereign rule of taste. But let us talk with more exactness, and endeavour by an exact analysis to find out what there is in comedy, whether of Aristophanes and Plautus, of Menander and Terence, of Moliere and his rivals, which is never obsolete, and must please all ages and all nations.

XI. I now speak particularly of comedy; for we must observe, that between that and other works of literature, especially tragedy, there is an essential difference, which the enemies of antiquity will not understand, and which I shall endeavour palpably to show.

Remarkable difference between the state of comedy, and other works of genius, with regard to their duration.

All works show the age in which they are produced; they carry its stamp upon them; the manners of the times are impressed by indehible marks. If it be allowed, that the best of past times were rude in comparison with ours, the cause of the ancients is decided against them; and the want of

politeness, with which their works are charged in our days, must be generally confessed. History alone seems to claim exemption from this accusation. Nobody will dare to say of Herodotus or Thucydides, of Livius or Tacitus, that which has been said without scruple of Homer and the ancient poets. The reason is, that history takes the nearest way to its purpose, and gives the characters and practices of nations, be they what they will ; it has no dependence upon its subject, and offers nothing to examination, but the art of the narrative. An history of China well written, would please a Frenchman as well as one of France. It is otherwise with mere works of genius, they depend upon their subjects, and consequently upon the characters and the practises of the times in which they were written ; this at least is the light in which they are beheld. This rule of judgment is not equitable ; for, as I have said over and over, all the orators and the poets are painters, and merely painters. They exhibit nature as it is before them, influenced by the accidents of education, which, without changing it entirely, yet give it, in different ages and climates, a different appearance ; but we make their success depend in a great degree upon their subject, that is, upon circumstances which we measure by the circumstances of our own days. According to this prejudice, oratory depends more upon its subject than history, and poetry yet more than oratory. Our times, therefore, show more regard to Herodotus and Suetonius, than to Demosthenes and Cicero, and more to all these than to Homer or Virgil. Of this prejudice, there are regular gra-

dations'; and to come back to the point which we have left, we show, for the same imperceptible reason, less regard to tragick poets than to others. The reason is, that the subjects of their paintings are more examined than the art. Thus comparing the Achilles and Hippolytus of Euripides, with those of Racine, we drive them off the stage, without considering that Racine's heroes will be driven off, in a future age, if the same rule of judgment be followed, and one time be measured by another.

Yet tragedy having the passions for its object, is not wholly exposed to the caprice of our taste, which would make our own manners the rule of human kind; for the passions of Grecian heroes are often dressed in external modes of appearance that disgust us, yet they breakthrough the veil when they are strongly marked, as we cannot deny them to be in Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The essence then gets the better of the circumstance. The passions of Greece and France do not so much differ by the particular characters of particular ages, as they agree by the participation of that which belongs to the same passion in all ages. Our three tragick poets will, therefore, get clear by suffering only a little ridicule, which falls directly upon their times; but these times and themselves will be well recompensed by the admiration which their art will irresistibly enforce.

Comedy is in a more lamentable situation; for, not only its object is the ridiculous, which, though in reality always the same, is so dependant on custom as to change its appearance with time, and with place; but the art of a comick writer is, to lay hold of that species of the ridiculous which will catch

the spectators of the present hour, without regard to futurity. But, though comedy has attained its end, and diverted the pit, for which it was written ; if it goes down to posterity, it is in a new world, where it is no longer known ; it becomes there quite a foreigner, because there are no longer the same originals, nor the same species of the ridiculous, nor the same spectators, but a set of merciless readers, who complain that they are tired with it, though it once filled Athens, Rome, or Paris, with merriment. This position is general, and comprises all poets and all ages. To say all at once, comedy is the slave of its subject, and of the reigning taste ; tragedy is not subject to the same degree of slavery, because the ends of the two species of poetry are different. For this reason, if we suppose that in all ages there are criticks who measure every thing by the same rule, it will follow, that if the comedy of Aristophanes be become obsolete, that of Menander likewise, after having delighted Athens, and revived again at Rome, at last suffered by the force of time. The Muse of Moliere has almost made both of them forgotten, and would still be walking the stage, if the desire of novelty did not in time make us weary of that which we have too frequently admired.

Those who have endeavoured to render their judgment independent upon manners and customs, and of such men there have been always some, have not judged so severely either of times, or of writers ; they have discovered that a certain resemblance runs through all polished ages, which are alike in essential things, and differ only in external manners, which, if we except religion, are things of indiffe-

rence ; that wherever there is genius, politeness, liberty, or plenty, there prevails an exact and delicate taste, which, however hard to be expressed, is felt by those that were born to feel it ; that Athens, the inventress of all the arts, the mother first of the Roman and then of general taste, did not consist of stupid savages ; that the Athenian and Augustan ages having always been considered as times that enjoyed a particular privilege of excellence, though we may distinguish the good authors from the bad, as in our own days, yet we ought to suspend, the vehemence of criticism, and proceed with caution and timidity before we pass sentence upon times and writers, whose good taste has been universally applauded. This obvious consideration has disposed them to pause ; they have endeavoured to discover the original of taste, and have found that there is not only a stable and immutable beauty, as there is a common understanding in all times and places, which is never obsolete ; but there is another kind of beauty, such as we are now treating, which depends upon times and places, and is therefore changeable. Such is the imperfection of every thing below, that one mode of beauty is never found without a mixture of the other, and from these two blended together results what is called the taste of an age. I am now speaking of an age sprightly and polite, an age which leaves works for a long time behind it, an age which is imitated or criticised when revolutions have thrown it out of sight.

Upon this incontestable principle, which supposes a beauty universal and absolute, and a beauty likewise relative and particular, which are mingled through one work in very different proportions, it

is easy to give an account of the contrary judgments passed on Aristophanes. If we consider him only with respect to the beauties, which, though they do not please us, delighted the Athenians, we shall condemn him at once, though even this sort of beauty may sometimes have its original in universal beauty carried to extravagance. Instead of commending him for being able to give merriment to the most refined nation of those days, we shall proceed to place that people with all their atticism, in the rank of savages whom we take upon us to degrade because they have no other qualifications but innocence and plain understanding. But have not we likewise amidst our more polished manners, beauties merely fashionable, which make part of our writings as of the writings of former times; beauties of which our self-love now makes us fond, but which, perhaps, will disgust our grandsons? Let us be more equitable, let us leave this relative beauty to its real value more or less in every age: or, if we must pass judgment upon it, let us say that these touches in Aristophanes, Menander, and Moliere, were well struck off in their own time; but, that comparing them with true beauty, that part of Aristophanes was a colouring too strong, that of Menander was too weak, and that of Moliere was a peculiar varnish formed of one and the other, which, without being an imitation, is itself inimitable, yet depending upon time, which will efface it by degrees, as our notions, which are every day changing, shall receive a sensible alteration. Much of this has already happened since the time of Moliere, who, if he was now to come again, must take a new road.

With respect to unalterable beauties, of which

comedy admits much fewer than tragedy, when they are the subject of our consideration, we must not too easily set Aristophanes and Plautus below Menander and Terence. We may properly hesitate with Boileau, whether we shall prefer the French comedy to the Greek and Latin. Let us only give, like him, the great rule for pleasing in all ages, and the key by which all the difficulties in passing judgment may be opened. This rule and this key are nothing else but the ultimate design of the comedy.

*Etudiez la cour, et connoissez la ville :
L'une et l'autre est toujours en modèles fertile.
C'est par-là que Moliere illustrant ses écrits
Peut-être de son art eût remporté le prix,
Si moins ami du peuple en ses doctes peintures
Il n'eût point fait souvent grimacer ses figures,
Quitté pour le bouffon l'agréable et le fin,
Et sans honte à Terence allié Tabarin*.*

In truth, Aristophanes and Plautus united buffoonery and delicacy in a greater degree than Moliere; and for this they may be blamed. That which then pleased at Athens and at Rome, was a transitory beauty, which had not sufficient foundation in truth, and therefore the taste changed. But, if we condemn those ages for this, what age shall we spare? Let us refer every thing to permanent and universal taste, and we shall find in Aristophanes at least as much to condemn as censure.

XII. But before we go on to his works, it may be allowed to make some reflections upon tragedy and comedy. Tragedy, though different according to the difference of times and writers, is uniform in its

Tragedy more uniform than comedy.

nature, being founded upon the passions, which never change. With comedy it is otherwise. Whatever difference there is between Echylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; between Corneille and Racine; between the French and the Greeks, it will not be found sufficient to constitute more than one species of tragedy.

The works of those great masters are, in some respects, like the sea-nymphs, of whom Ovid says, "That their faces were not the same, yet so much alike that they might be known to be sisters."

*Facies non omnibus una,
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse rotum.*

The reason is, that the same passions give action and animation to them all. With respect to the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus, Menander and Terence, Moliere and his imitators, if we compare them one with another, we shall find something of a family likeness, but much less strongly marked, on account of the different appearance which ridicule and pleasantry take from the different manners of every age. They will not pass for sisters, but for very distant relations. The muse of Aristophanes and Plautus, to speak of her with justice, is a bacchanal at least, whose malignant tongue is dipped in gall, or in poison dangerous as that of the aspic or viper; but whose bursts of malice, and sallies of wit, often give a blow where it is not expected. The muse of Terence, and consequently of Menander, is an artless and unpainted beauty, of easy gaiety, whose features are rather delicate than striking, rather soft than strong, rather plain and modest than great and haughty, but always perfectly natural.

Ce ne'st pas un portrait, une image semblable :
C'est un fils, un amant, un père véritable.

The muse of Moliere is not always plainly dressed, but takes airs of quality, and rises above her original condition, so as to attire herself gracefully in magnificent apparel. In her manners she mingles elegance with foolery, force with delicacy, and grandeur, or even haughtiness, with plainness and modesty. If sometimes, to please the people, she gives a loose to farce, it is only the gay folly of a moment, from which she immediately returns, and which lasts no longer than a slight intoxication. The first might be painted encircled with little satyrs, some grossly foolish, the others delicate, but all extremely licentious and malignant; monkeys always ready to laugh in your face, and to point out to indiscriminate ridicule, the good and the bad. The second may be shown encircled with geniuses full of softness and of candour, taught to please by nature alone, and whose honied dialect is so much the more insinuating, as there is no temptation to distrust it. The last must be accompanied with the delicate laughter of the court, and that of the city somewhat more coarse, and neither the one nor the other can be separated from her. The muse of Aristophanes and of Plautus can never be denied the honour of sprightliness, animation, and invention; nor that of Menander and Terence the praise of nature and of delicacy; to that of Moliere must be allowed the happy secret of uniting all the piquancy of the former, with a peculiar art which they did not know. Of these three sorts of merit, let us show to each the justice that is due, let us in each separate the pure and the true from the false

gold, without approving or condemning either the one or the other in the gross. If we must pronounce in general upon the taste of their writings, we must indisputably allow that Menander, Terence, and Moliere, will give most pleasure to a decent audience, and consequently that they approach nearer to the true beauty, and have less mixture of beauties purely relative, than Plautus and Aristophanes.

If we distinguish comedy by its subjects, we shall find three sorts among the Greeks, and as many among the Latins, all differently dressed: if we distinguish it by ages and authors, we shall again find three sorts; and we shall find three sorts a third time if we regard more closely the subject. As the ultimate and general rules of all these sorts of comedy are the same, it will, perhaps, be agreeable to our purpose to sketch them out before we give a full display of the last class. I can do nothing better on this occasion than transcribe the twenty-fifth reflection of Rapin upon poetry in particular.

General rules XIII. "Comedy, says he*, is a representation of comedy. presentation of common life: its end is to show the faults of particular characters on the stage, to correct the disorder of the people by the fear of ridicule. Thus ridicule is the essential part of a comedy. Ridicule may be in words, or in things; it may be decent, or grotesque. To find what is ridiculous in every thing, is the gift merely of nature; for all the actions of life have their bright and their dark sides; something serious, and something merry. But Aristotle, who has given rules for drawing tears, has given none for raising laughter; for this is merely the work of nature,

* *Reflections sur la Poët.* p. 154. Paris, 1684.

and must proceed from genius, with very little help from art or matter. The Spaniards have a turn to find the ridicule in things much more than we: and the Italians, who are natural comedians, have a better turn for expressing it; their language is more proper for it than ours, by an air of drollery which it can put on, and of which ours may become capable when it shall be brought nearer to perfection. In short, that agreeable turn, that gaiety which yet maintains the delicacy of its character without falling into dullness or into buffoonery, that elegant taillery which is the flower of fine wit, is the qualification which comedy requires. We must, however, remember that the true artificial ridicule, which is required on the theatre, must be only a transcript of the ridicule which nature affords. Comedy is naturally written, when, being on the theatre, a man can fancy himself in a private family, or a particular part of the town, and meets with nothing but what he really meets with in the world; for it is no real comedy in which a man does not see his own picture, and find his own manners and those of the people among whom he lives. Menander succeeded only by this art among the Greeks: and the Romans, when they sat at Terence's comedies, imagined themselves in a private party; for they found nothing there which they had not been used to find in common company. The great art of comedy is to adhere to nature without deviation; to have general sentiments and expressions which all the world can understand: for the writer must keep it always in his mind, that the coarsest touches after nature will please more than the most delicate with which na-

ture is inconsistent. However, low and mean words should never be allowed upon the stage, if they are not supported with some kind of wit. Proverbs and vulgar smartnesses can never be suffered, unless they have something in them of nature and pleasantry. This is the universal principle of comedy; whatever is represented in this manner must please, and nothing can ever please without it. It is by application to the study of nature alone that we arrive at probability, which is the only infallible guide to theatrical success: without this probability every thing is defective, and that which has it, is beautiful: he that follows this, can never go wrong; and the most common faults of comedy proceed from the neglect of propriety, and the precipitation of incidents. Care must likewise be taken that the hints, made use of to introduce the incidents, are not too strong, that the spectator may enjoy the pleasure of finding out their meaning: but commonly the weak place in our comedy is the untying of the plot, in which we almost always fail, on account of the difficulty which there is in disentangling of what has been perplexed. To perplex an intrigue is easy, the imagination does it by itself; but it must be disentangled merely by the judgment, and is, therefore, seldom done happily: and he that reflects a very little, will find that most comedies are faulty by an unnatural catastrophe. It remains to be examined whether comedy will allow pictures larger than the life, that this strength of the strokes may make a deeper impression upon the mind of the spectators; that is, if a poet may make a covetous man more covetous, and a peevish man more impertinent and more

troublesome than he really is. To which I answer, that this was the practice of Plautus, whose aim was to please the people; but that Terence, who wrote for gentlemen, confined himself within the compass of nature, and represented vice without addition or aggravation. However, these extravagant characters, such as the Citizen turned Gentleman, and the Hypochondriac Patient of Moliere, have lately succeeded at court, where delicacy is carried so far; but every thing, even to provincial interludes, is well received if it has but merriment, for we had rather laugh than admire. These are the most important rules of comedy."

XIV. These rules, indeed, are common to the three kinds which I have in my mind; but it is necessary to distinguish each from the rest, which may be done by diversity of matter, which always makes some diversity of management. The old and middle comedy simply represented real adventures: in the same way some passages of history and of fable might form a class of comedies, which should resemble it without having its faults; such is the *Amphitryon*. How many moral tales, how many adventures ancient and modern, how many little fables of *Æsop*, of *Phaedrus*, of *Fontaine*, or some other ancient poet, would make pretty exhibitions, if they were all made use of as materials by skilful hands? And have we not seen some like *Timon the Man Hater*, that have been successful in this way? This sort chiefly regards the Italians. The ancient exhibition called a *satyre*, because the satyrs played their

Three sorts
of comedy.

part in it, of which we have no other instance than the Cyclops of Euripides, has, without doubt, given occasion to the pastoral comedies, for which we are chiefly indebted to Italy, and which are there more cultivated than in France. It is, however, a kind of exhibition that would have its charms, if it was touched with elegance and without meanness; it is the pastoral put into action. To conclude, the new comedy, invented by Menander, has produced the comedy properly so called in our times. This is that which has for its subject general pictures of common life, and feigned names and adventures, whether of the court or of the city. This third kind is uncontestedly the most noble, and has received the strongest sanction from custom. It is likewise the most difficult to perform, because it is merely the work of invention, in which the poet has no help from real passages, or persons, which the tragick poet always makes use of. Who knows but by deep thinking, another kind of comedy may be invented wholly different from the three which I have mentioned; such is the fruitfulness of comedy: but its course is already too wide for the discovery of new fields to be wished, and on ground where we are already so apt to stumble, nothing is so dangerous as novelty imperfectly understood. This is the rock on which men have often split in every kind of pursuit; to go no further, in that of grammar and language: it is better to endeavour after novelty in the manner of expressing common things, than to hunt for ideas out of the way, in which many a man loses himself. The ill success

of that odd composition Tragick Comedy, a monster wholly unknown to antiquity, sufficiently shows the danger of novelty in attempts like these.

XV. To finish the parallel of the Whether tragedy or comedy be the harder equally common and important, which to write.

has been oftener proposed than well decided: it is, whether comedy or tragedy be most easy or difficult to be well executed. I shall not have the temerity to determine positively a question which so many great geniuses have been afraid to decide: but if it be allowed to every literary man to give his reason for and against a mere work of genius, considered without respect to its good or bad tendency, I shall in a few words give my opinion, drawn from the nature of the two works, and the qualifications they demand. Horace* proposes a question nearly of the same kind: "It has been inquired, whether a good poem be the work of art or nature: for my part I do not see much to be done by art without genius, nor by genius without knowledge. The one is necessary to the other, and the success depends upon their co-operation." If we should endeavour to accommodate matters in imitation of this decision of Horace, it were easy to say at once, that supposing two geniuses equal, one tragick and the other comick, supposing the art likewise equal in each, one would be as easy or difficult as the other; but this, though satisfactory in the simple question put by Horace, will not be sufficient here. Nobody can doubt but genius and industry contribute their part to every thing valuable, and particularly to

* Poet. v. 407.

good poetry. But if genius and study were to be weighed one against the other, in order to discover which must contribute most to a good work, the question would become more curious, and, perhaps, very difficult of solution. Indeed, though nature must have a great part of the expense of poetry, yet no poetry lasts long that is not very correct : the balance, therefore, seems to incline in favour of correction. For is it not known, that Virgil, with less genius than Ovid, is yet valued more by men of exquisite judgment ; or, without going so far, Boileau, the Horace of our time, who composed with so much labour, and asked Moliere where he found his rhyme so easily, has said, " If I write four words, I shall blot out three ;" has not Boileau, by his polished lines, retouched and retouched a thousand times, gained the preference above the works of the same Moliere, which are so natural, and produced by so fruitful a genius ! Horace was of that opinion, for when he is teaching the writers of his age the art of poetry, he tells them in plain terms, that Rome would excel in writing as in arms, if the poets were not afraid of the labour, patience, and time required to polish their pieces. He thought every poem was bad that had not been brought ten times back to the anvil, and required that a work should be kept nine years, as a child is nine months in the womb of its mother, to restrain that natural impatience which combines with sloth and self-love to disguise faults ; so certain is it that correction is the touchstone of writing.

The question proposed comes back to the comparison which I have been making between genius and

correction, since we are now engaged in inquiring whether there is more or less difficulty in writing tragedy or comedy : for as we must compare nature and study one with another, since they must both concur more or less to make a poet ; so if we will compare the labours of two different minds in different kinds of writing, we must, with regard to the authors, compare the force of genius, and with respect to the composition, the difficulties of the task.

The genius of the tragick and comick writer will be easily allowed to be remote from each other. Every performance, be what it will, requires a turn of mind which a man cannot confer upon himself : it is purely the gift of nature, which determines those who have it, to pursue, almost in spite of themselves, the taste which predominates in their minds. Pascal found in his childhood, that he was a mathematician, and Vandyke that he was born a painter. Sometimes this internal direction of the mind does not make such evident discoveries of itself ; but it is rare to find Corneilles who have lived long without knowing that they were poets. Corneille having once got some notion of his powers, triēd a long time on all sides to know what particular direction he should take. He had first made an attempt in comedy, in an age when it was yet so gross in France that it could give no pleasure to polite persons. Melite was so well received when he dressed her out, that she gave rise to a new species of comedy and comedians. This success, which encouraged Corneille to pursue that sort of comedy of which he was the first inventor, left him no reason to imagine, that he was one day to produce those master-pieces of tragedy, which his

muse displayed afterwards with so much splendour ; and yet less did he imagine, that his comick pieces, which, for want of any that were preferable, were then very much in fashion, would be eclipsed by another genius * formed upon the Greeks and Romans, and who would add to their excellencies improvements of his own, and that this modish comedy, to which Corneille, as to his idol, dedicated his labours, would quickly be forgot. He wrote first Medea, and afterwards the Cid, and, by that prodigious flight of his genius, he discovered, though late, that nature had formed him to run in no other course but that of Sophocles. Happy genius ! that, without rule or imitation, could at once take so high a flight ; having once, as I may say, made himself an eagle, he never afterwards quitted the path, which he had worked out for himself, over the heads of the writers of his time : yet he retained some traces of the false taste which infected the whole nation ; but even in this, he deserves our admiration, since in time he changed it completely by the reflections he made, and those he occasioned. In short, Corneille was born for tragedy, as Moliere for comedy. Moliere, indeed, knew his own genius sooner, and was not less happy in procuring applause, though it often happened to him as to Corneille,

*L'Ignorance et l'Erreur à ses naissantes pièces
En habit de Marquis, en robes de Comtesses,
Vinssent pour dissamer son chef-d'œuvre nouveau,
Et secoüer la tête à l'endroit le plus beau.*

But, without taking any farther notice of the time at which either came to the knowledge of his own

* Moliere.

genius, let us suppose that the powers of tragedy and comedy were as equally shared between Moliere and Corneille, as they are different in their own nature, and then nothing more will remain than to compare the several difficulties of each composition, and to rate those difficulties together which are common to both.

It appears, first, that the tragick poet has in his subject an advantage over the comick, for he takes it from history ; and his rival, at least in the more elevated and splendid comedy, is obliged to form it by his own invention. Now, it is not so easy as it might seem to find comick subjects capable of a new and pleasing form ; but history is a source, if not inexhaustible, yet certainly so copious as never to leave the genius a-ground. It is true, that invention seems to have a wider field than history : real facts are limited in their number, but the facts which may be feigned have no end ; but though, in this respect, invention may be allowed to have the advantage, is the difficulty of inventing to be accounted as nothing ? To make a tragedy, is to get materials together, and to make use of them like a skilful architect ; but to make a comedy, is to build like *Æsop* in the air. It is in vain to boast that the compass of invention is as wide as the extent of desire : every thing is limited, and the mind of man like every thing else. Besides, invention must be in conformity to nature ; but distinct and remarkable characters are very rare in nature herself. Moliere has got hold on the principal touches of ridicule. If any man should bring characters less strong, he will be in danger of dulness. Where comedy is to be kept up by subordinate personages,

it is in great danger. All the force of a picture must arise from the principal persons, and not from the multitude clustered up together. In the same manner, a comedy, to be good, must be supported by a single striking character, and not by under-parts.

But, on the contrary, tragick characters are without number, though of them the general outlines are limited ; but dissimulation, jealousy, policy, ambition, desire of dominion, and other interests and passions, are various without end, and take a thousand different forms in different situations of history ; so that as long as there is tragedy, there may be always novelty. Thus the jealous and dissembling Mithridates, so happily painted by Racine, will not stand in the way of a poet who shall attempt a jealous and dissembling Tiberius. The stormy violence of an Achilles will always leave room for the stormy violence of Alexander.

But the case is very different with avarice, trifling vanity, hypocrisy, and other vices, considered as ridiculous. It would be safer to double and treble all the tragedies of our greatest poets, and use all their subjects over and over, as has been done with Oedipus and Sophonisba, than to bring again upon the stage in five acts a Miser, a Citizen turned Gentleman, a Tartuffe, and other subjects sufficiently known. Not that these popular vices are less capable of diversification; or are less varied by different circumstances, than the vices and passions of heroes ; but that if they were to be brought over again in comedies, they would be less distinct, less exact, less forcible, and, consequently, less applauded. Pleasantry and ridicule must be more

strongly marked than heroism and pathos, which support themselves by their own force. Besides, though these two things of so different natures could support themselves equally in equal variety, which is very far from being the case ; yet comedy, as it now stands, consists not in incidents, but in characters. Now it is by incidents only that characters are diversified, as well upon the stage of comedy, as upon the stage of life. Comedy, as Moliere has left it, resembles the pictures of manners drawn by the celebrated La Bruyere. Would any man after him venture to draw them over again, he would expose himself to the fate of those who have ventured to continue them. For instance, what could we add to his character of the *Absent Man*? Shall we put him in other circumstances? The principal strokes of absence of mind will always be the same ; and there are only those striking touches which are fit for a comedy, of which the end is painting after nature, but with strength and sprightliness like the designs of Callot. If comedy were among us what it is in Spain, a kind of romance, consisting of many circumstances and intrigues, perplexed and disentangled, so as to surprise ; if it was nearly the same with that which Corneille practised in his time ; if, like that of Terence, it went no farther than to draw the common portraits of simple nature, and show us fathers, sons, and rivals ; notwithstanding the uniformity, which would always prevail as in the plays of Terence, and probably in those of Menander, whom he imitated in his four first pieces, there would always be a resource found either in variety of incidents, like those of the Spaniards, or in the repetition of the same characters in the

way of Terence : but the case is now very different ; the publick calls for new characters and nothing else. Multiplicity of accidents, and the laborious contrivance of an intrigue, are not now allowed to shelter a weak genius that would find great conveniences in that way of writing. Nor does it suit the taste of comedy, which requires an air less constrained, and such freedom and ease of manners as admits nothing of the romantick. She leaves all the pomp of sudden events to the novels, or little romances, which were the diversion of the last age. She allows nothing but a succession of characters resembling nature, and falling in without any apparent contrivance. Racine has likewise taught us to give to tragedy the same simplicity of air and action ; he has endeavoured to disentangle it from that great number of incidents, which made it rather a study than diversion to the audience, and which show the poet not so much to abound in invention, as to be deficient in taste. But, notwithstanding all that he has done, or that we can do, to make it simple, it will always have the advantage over comedy in the number of its subjects, because it admits more variety of situations and events, which give variety and novelty to the characters. A miser, copied after nature, will always be the miser of Plautus or Moliere ; but a Nero, or a prince like Nero, will not always be the hero of Racine. Comedy admits of so little intrigue, that the miser cannot be shown in any such position as will make his picture new ; but the great events of tragedy may put Nero in such circumstances as to make him wholly another character.

But, in the second place, over and above the sub-

jects, may we not say something concerning the final purpose of comedy and tragedy? The purpose of the one is to divert, and the other to move; and of these two, which is the easier? To go to the bottom of those purposes; to move is to strike those strings of the heart which is most natural, terror and pity: to divert is to make one laugh, a thing which indeed is natural enough, but more delicate. The gentleman and the rustick have both sensibility and tenderness of heart, perhaps in greater or less degree; but as they are men alike, the heart is moved by the same touches. They both love likewise to send their thoughts abroad, and to expand themselves in merriment; but the springs which must be touched for this purpose, are not the same in the gentleman and the rustick. The passions depend on nature, and merriment upon education. The clown will laugh at a waggerly, and the gentleman only at a stroke of delicate conceit. The spectators of a tragedy, if they have but a little knowledge, are almost all on a level; but with respect to comedy, we have three classes, if not more, the people, the learned, and the court. If there are certain cases in which all may be comprehended in the term people, this is not one of those cases. Whatever father Rapin may say about it, we are more willing even to admire than to laugh. Every man that has any power of distinction, laughs as rarely as the philosopher admires; for we are not to reckon those fits of laughter which are not incited by nature, and which are given merely to complaisance, to respect, flattery, and good-humour; such as break out at sayings which

pretend to smartness in assemblies. The laughter of the theatre is of another stamp. Every reader and spectator judges of wit by his own standard, and measures it by his capacity, or by his condition : the different capacities and conditions of men make them diverted on very different occasions. If, therefore, we consider the end of the tragick and comick poet, the comedian must be involved in much more difficulties, without taking in the obstructions to be encountered equally by both, in an art which consists in raising the passions, or the mirth of a great multitude. The tragedian has little to do but to reflect upon his own thought, and draw from his heart those sentiments which will certainly make their way to the hearts of others, if he found them in his own. The other must take many forms, and change himself almost into as many persons, as he undertakes to satisfy and divert.

It may be said, that, if genius be supposed equal, and success supposed to depend upon genius, the business will be equally easy and difficult to one author and to the other. This objection is of no weight ; for the same question still recurs, which is, whether of these two kinds of genius is more valuable or more rare. If we proceed by example, and not by reasoning, we shall decide I think in favour of comedy.

It may be said, that, if merely art be considered, it will require deeper thoughts to form a plan just and simple ; to produce happy surprises without apparent contrivance ; to carry a passion skilfully through its gradations to its height ; to arrive happily to the end by always moving from it, as Ithaca

seemed to fly Ulysses ; to unite the acts and scenes ; and to raise by insensible degrees a striking edifice, of which the least merit shall be exactness of proportion. It may be added, that in comedy this art is infinitely less, for there the characters come upon the stage with very little artifice or plot : the whole scheme is so connected that we see it at once; and the plan and disposition of the parts make a small part of its excellence, in comparison of a gloss of pleasantry diffused over each scene, which is more the happy effect of a lucky moment, than of long consideration.

These objections, and many others, which so fruitful a subject might easily suggest, it is not difficult to refute : and if we were to judge by the impression made on the mind by tragedies and comedies of equal excellence, perhaps, when we examine those impressions, it will be found that a sally of pleasantry, which diverts all the world, required more thought than a passage which gave the highest pleasure in tragedy ; and to this determination we shall be more inclined when a closer examination shall show us, that a happy vein of tragedy is opened and effused at less expense, than a well-placed witticism in comedy has required merely to assign its place.

It would be too much to dwell long upon such a digression ; and as I have no business to decide the question, I leave both that and my arguments to the taste of each particular reader, who will find what is to be said for or against it. My purpose was only to say of comedy, considered as a work of genius, all that a man of letters can be supposed to

deliver without departing from his character, and without palliating in any degree the corrupt use which has been almost always made of an exhibition which in its nature might be innocent ; but has been vicious from the time that it has been infected with the wickedness of men. It is not for publick exhibitions that I am now writing, but for literary inquiries. The stage is too much frequented, and books too much neglected. Yet it is to the literature of Greece and Rome that we are indebted for that valuable taste, which will be insensibly lost by the affected negligence which now prevails of having recourse to originals. If reason has been a considerable gainer, it must be confessed that taste has been somewhat a loser.

To return to Aristophanes : so many great men of antiquity, through a long succession of ages, down to our times, have set a value upon his works, that we cannot naturally suppose them contemptible, notwithstanding the essential faults with which he may be justly reproached. It is sufficient to say, that he was esteemed by Plato and Cicero ; and to conclude by that which does him most honour, but still falls short of justification, the strong and sprightly eloquence of St. Chrysostom drew its support from the masculine and vigorous atticism of this sarcastic comedian, to whom the father paid the same regard as Alexander to Homer, that of putting his works under his pillow, that he might read them at night before he slept, and in the morning as soon as he awaked.

GENERAL CONCLUSION.

TO

BRUMOY'S GREEK THEATRE.

I. **T**HUS I have given a faithful extract of the remains of Aristophanes. That I have not shown them in their true form, I am not afraid that any body will complain. I have given an account of every thing as far as it was consistent with moral decency. No pen, however cynical or heathenish, would venture to produce in open day the horrid passages which I have put out of sight ; and instead of regretting any part that I have suppressed, the very suppression will easily show to what degree the Athenians were infected with licentiousness of imagination and corruption of principles. If the taste of antiquity allows us to preserve what time and barbarity have hitherto spared, religion and virtue at least oblige us not to spread it before the eyes of mankind. To end this work in an useful manner, let us examine in a few words the four particulars which are most striking in the eleven pieces of Aristophanes.

II. The first is the character of the ancient comedy, which has no likeness to any thing in nature. Its genius is so wild and strange, that it scarce admits a definition. In what class of comedy must we place it ? It appears to me to be a species of writing by itself. If

Summary of
the four articles
treated of in
this discourse.

Character of
ancient co-
medy.

we had Phrynicus, Plato, Eupolis, Critinus Amcip-sias, and so many other celebrated rivals of Aristophanes, of whom all that we can find are a few fragments scattered in Plutarch, Athenias, and Suidas, we might compare them with our poet, settle the general scheme, observe the minuter differences, and form a complete notion of their comick stage. But for want of all this we can fix only on Aristophanes, and it is true that he may be in some measure sufficient to furnish a tolerable judgment of the old comedy ; for if we believe him, and who can be better credited ? he was the most daring of all his brethren the poets, who practised the same kind of writing. Upon this supposition we may conclude, that the comedy of those days consisted in an allegory drawn out and continued ; an allegory never very regular, but often ingenious, and almost always carried beyond strict propriety, of satire keen and biting, but diversified, sprightly and unexpected ; so that the wound was given before it was perceived. Their points of satire were thunderbolts, and their wild figures, with their variety and quickness, had the effect of lightning. Their imitation was carried even to resemblance of persons, and their common entertainments was a parody of rival poets joined, if I may so express it, with a parody of manners and habits.

But it would be tedious to draw out to the reader that which he will already have perceived better than myself. I have no design to anticipate his reflections ; and therefore shall only sketch the picture, which he must finish by himself : he will pursue the subject farther, and form to himself a

view of the common and domestick life of the Athenians, of which this kind of comedy was a picture, with some aggravation of the features: he will bring within his view all the customs, manners, and vices, and the whole character of the people of Athens. By bringing all these together he will fix in his mind an indelible idea of a people in whom so many contrarieties were united, and who in a manner that can scarce be expressed, connected nobility with the cast of Athens, wisdom with madness, rage for novelty with a bigotry for antiquity, the politeness of a monarchy with the roughness of a republick, refinement with coarseness, independence with slavery, haughtiness with servile compliance, severity of manners with debauchery, a kind of irreligion with piety. We shall do this in reading; as in travelling through different nations we make ourselves masters of their characters by combining their different appearances, and reflecting upon what we see.

III. The government of Athens makes a fine part of the ancient comedy. In most states the mystery of government is confined within the walls of the cabinet; even in commonwealths it does not pass but through five or six heads, who rule those that think themselves the rulers. Oratory dares not touch it, and comedy still less. Cicero himself did not speak freely upon so nice a subject as the Roman commonwealth; but the Athenian eloquence was informed of the whole secret, and searches the recesses of the human mind, to fetch it out and expose it to the people. Demosthenes, and his contemporaries, speak with a freedom at which we are

The government of the Athenians.

astonished, notwithstanding the notion we have of a popular government, yet at what time but this did comedy adventure to claim the same rights with civil eloquence? The Italian comedy of the last age, all daring as it was, could for its boldness come into no competition with the ancient. It was limited to general satire, which was sometimes carried so far, that the malignity was overlooked in an attention to the wild exaggeration, the unexpected strokes, the pungent wit, and the malignity concealed under such wild flights as became the character of Harlequin. But though it so far resembled Aristophanes, our age is yet at a great distance from his, and the Italian comedy from his scenes. But with respect to the liberty of censuring the government, there can be no comparison made of one age or comedy with another. Aristophanes is the only writer of his kind, and is for that reason of the highest value. A powerful state set at the head of Greece, is the subject of his merriment, and that merriment is allowed by the state itself. This appears to us an inconsistency; but it is true that it was the interest of the state to allow it, though not always without inconveniency. It was a restraint upon the ambition and tyranny of single men, a matter of great importance to a people so very jealous of their liberty. Cleon, Alcibiades, Lamachus, and many other generals and magistrates, were kept under by fear of the comick strokes of a poet so little cautious as Aristophanes. He was once indeed in danger of paying dear for his wit. He professed, as he tells us himself, to be of great use by his writings to the state; and rated his merit so high as to complain that he was not

rewarded. But, under pretence of this publick spirit, he spared no part of the publick conduct, neither was government, councils, revenues, popular assemblies, secret proceedings in judicature, choice of ministers, the government of the nobles, or that of the people spared.

The Acharnians, the Peace, and the Birds, are eternal monuments of the boldness of the poet, who was not afraid of censuring the government for the obstinate continuance of a ruinous war, for undertaking new ones, and feeding itself with wild imaginations, and running to destruction as it did for an idle point of honour.

Nothing can be more reproachful to the Athenians than his play of the Knights, when he represents under an allegory that may be easily seen through, the nation of the Athenians as an old doting fellow tricked by a new man, such as Cleon and his companions, who were of the same stamp.

A single glance upon Lysistrata, and the Female Orators, must raise astonishment when the Athenian policy is set below the schemes of women, whom the author makes ridiculous for no other reason than to bring contempt upon their husbands, who held the helm of government.

The Wasps is written to expose the madness of people for lawsuits and litigations, and a multitude of iniquities are laid open.

It may easily be gathered, that notwithstanding the wise laws of Solon, which they still professed to follow, the government was falling into decay, for we are not to understand the jest of Aristophanes in the literal sense. It is plain that the corruption, though we should suppose it but half as much as

we are told, was very great, for it ended in the destruction of Athens, which could scarce raise its head again after it had been taken by Lysander. Though we consider Aristophanes as a comick writer who deals in exaggeration, and bring down his stories to their true standard, we still find that the fundamentals of their government fail in almost all the essential points. That the people were inveigled by men of ambition ; that all councils and decrees had their original in factious combinations ; that avarice and private interest animated all their policy to the hurt of the publick ; that their revenues were ill managed, their allies improperly treated ; that their good citizens were sacrificed, and the bad put in places ; that a mad eagerness for judicial litigation took up all their attention within, and that war was made without, not so much with wisdom and precaution, as with temerity and good luck ; that the love of novelty and fashion in the manner of managing the publick affairs was a madness universally prevalent ; and that Melanthius says in Plutarch, the republick of Athens was continued only by the perpetual discord of those that managed its affairs. This remedied the dishonour by preserving the equilibrium, and was kept always in action by eloquence and comedy.

This is what in general may be drawn from the reading Aristophanes. The sagacity of the readers will go farther : they will compare the different forms of government by which that tumultuous people endeavoured to regulate or increase the democracy, which forms were all fatal to the state, because they were not built upon lasting foundations, and had all in them the principles of destruction.



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A strange contrivance it was to perpetuate a state by changing the just proportion which Solon had wisely settled between the nobles and the people ; and by opening a gate to the skilful ambition of those who had art or courage enough to force themselves into the government by means of the people, whom they flattered with protections that they might more certainly crush them.

IV. Another part of the works of Aristophanes are his pleasant reflections upon the most celebrated poets : the shafts which he lets fly at the three heroes of tragedy, and particularly at Euripides, might incline the reader to believe that he had little esteem for those great men ; and that probably the spectators that applauded him were of his opinion. This conclusion would not be just, as I have already shown by arguments, which, if I had not offered them, the reader might have discovered better than I. But that I may leave no room for objections, and prevent any shadow of captiousness, I shall venture to observe, that posterity will not consider Racine as less a master of the French stage because his plays were ridiculed by parodies. Parody always fixes upon the best pieces, and was more to the taste of the Greeks than to ours. At present the high theatres give it up to stages of inferior rank ; but in Athens the comick theatre considered parody as its principal ornament, for a reason which is worth examining. The ancient comedy was not like ours, a remote and delicate imitation ; it was the art of gross mimickry, and would have been supposed to have missed its aim, had it not copied the mien, the walk, the dress, the motions of the face of those whom it exhibited.

Now parody is an imitation of this kind ; it is a change of serious to burlesque, by a slight variation of words, inflection of voice, or an imperceptible art of mimickry. Parody is to poetry as a mask to a face. As the tragedies of Eschylus, of Sophocles, and of Euripides, were much in fashion, and were known by memory to the people, the parodies upon them would naturally strike and please, when they were accompanied by the grimaces of a good comedian, who mimicked with archness a serious character. Such is the malignity of human nature ; we love to laugh at those whom we esteem most, and by this make ourselves some recompense for the unwilling homage which we pay to merit. The parodies upon these poets made by Aristophanes, ought to be considered rather as encomiums than satires. They give us occasion to examine whether the criticisms are just or not in themselves : but what is more important, they afford no proof that Euripides or his predecessors wanted the esteem of Aristophanes or his age. The statues raised to their honour, the respect paid by the Athenians to their writings, and the careful preservation of those writings themselves, are immortal testimonies in their favour, and make it unnecessary for me to stop any longer upon so plausible a solution of so frivolous an objection.

Frequent ridic- V. The most troublesome diffi-
cule of the gods. culty, and that which, so far as I
know, has not yet been cleared to satisfaction, is
the contemptuous manner in which Aristophanes
treats the gods. Though I am persuaded in my
own mind that I have found the true solution of
this question, I am not sure that it will make more

impression than that of M. Boivin, who contents himself with saying, that every thing was allowed to the comick poets ; and that even Atheism was permitted to the licentiousness of the stage : that the Athenians applauded all that made them laugh ; and believed that Jupiter himself laughed with them at the smart sayings of a poet. Mr. Collier, an Englishman, in his remarks upon their stage, attempts to prove that Aristophanes was an open Atheist. For my part I am not satisfied with the account either of one or the other, and think it better to venture a new system, of which I have already dropt some hints in this work. The truth is, that the Athenians professed to be great 'laughers ; always ready for merriment on whatever subject. But it cannot be conceived that Aristophanes should, without punishment, publish himself an Atheist, unless we suppose that Atheism was the opinion likewise of the spectators, and of the judges commissioned to examine the plays ; and yet this cannot be suspected of those who boasted themselves the most religious nation, and naturally the most superstitious, of all Greece. How can we suppose those to be Atheists who passed sentence upon Diagoras, Socrates, and Alcibiades, for impiety ? These are glaring inconsistencies. To say like M. Boivin, for sake of getting clear of the difficulty, that Alcibiades, Socrates, and Diagoras attacked religion seriously, and were therefore not allowed, but that Aristophanes did it in jest, or was authorized by custom, would be to trifle with the difficulty, and not to clear it. Though the Athenians loved merriment, it is not likely that if Aristophanes had professed Atheism, they would have

spared him more than Socrates, who had as much life and pleasantry in his discourses, as the poet in his comedies. The pungent raillery of Aristophanes, and the fondness of the Athenians for it, are therefore not the true reason why the poet was spared when Socrates was condemned. I shall now solve the question with great brevity.

The true answer to this question is given by Plutarch in his treatise of reading of the poets. Plutarch attempts to prove that youth is not to be prohibited the reading of the poets; but to be cautioned against such parts as may have bad effects. They are first to be prepossessed with this leading principle, that poetry is false and fabulous. He then enumerates at length the fables which Homer and other poets have invented about their deities; and concludes thus: “ When therefore there is found in poetical compositions any thing strange and shocking, with respect to gods, or demi-gods, or concerning the virtue of any excellent and renowned characters, he that should receive these fictions as truth would be corrupted by an erroneous opinion: but he that always keeps in his mind the fables and allusions, which it is the business of poetry to contrive, will not be injured by these stories, nor receive any ill impressions upon his thoughts, but will be ready to censure himself, if at any time he happens to be afraid, lest Neptune in his rage should split the earth, and lay open the infernal regions.” Some pages afterwards, he tells us, “ That religion is a thing difficult of comprehension, and above the understanding of poets; which it is,” says he, “ necessary to have in mind when we read their fables.”

The Pagans therefore had their fables, which they distinguished from their religion ; for no one can be persuaded that Ovid intended his *Metamorphoses* as a true representation of the religion of the Romans. The poets were allowed their imaginations about their gods, as things which have no regard to the publick worship. Upon this principle, I say, as I said before, there was amongst the Pagans two sorts of religion ; one a poetical, and a real religion : one practical, the other theatrical ; a mythology for the poets, a theology for use. They had fables, and a worship, which though founded upon fable, was yet very different.

Diagoras, Socrates, Plato, and the philosophers of Athens, with Cicero, their admirer, and the other pretended wise men of Rome, are men by themselves. These were the Atheists with respect to the ancients. We must not therefore look into Plato, or into Cicero for the real religion of the Pagans, as distinct from the fabulous. These two authors involve themselves in the clouds, that their opinions may not be discovered. They durst not openly attack the real religion ; but destroyed it by attacking fable.

To distinguish here with exactness the agreement or difference between fable and religion, is not at present my intention : it is not easy* to show with exactness what was the Athenian notion of the nature of the gods whom they worshipped. Plutarch himself tells us, that this was a thing very difficult for the philosophers. It is sufficient for me that the mythology and theology of the ancients were different at the bottom ; that the names of the

* See St. Paul upon the subject of the Ignoto Deo.

gods continued the same ; and that long custom gave up one to the caprices of the poets, without supposing the other affected by them. This being once settled upon the authority of the ancients themselves, I am no longer surprised to see Jupiter, Minerva, Neptune, Bacchus, appear upon the stage in the comedy of Aristophanes ; and at the same time receiving incense in the temples of Athens. This is, in my opinion, the most reasonable account of a thing so obscure ; and I am ready to give up my system to any other, by which the Athenians shall be made more consistent with themselves ; those Athenians who sat laughing at the gods of Aristophanes, while they condemned Socrates for having appeared to despise the gods of his country.

The Mimi and Pantomimes. VI. A word is now to be spoken of the Mimi, which had some relation to comedy. This appellation was, by the Greeks and Romans, given to certain dramatick performances, and to the actors that played them. The denomination sufficiently shows, that their art consisted in imitation and buffoonery. Of their works, nothing, or very little, is remaining ; so that they can only be considered by the help of some passages in authors : from which little is to be learned that deserves consideration. I shall extract the substance, as I did with respect to the chorus, without losing time, by defining all the different species, or producing all the quotations, which would give the reader more trouble than instruction. He that desires fuller instructions may read Vossius, Valois, Saumaises, and Gataker, of whose compilations, however learned, I should think it shame to be the author.

The 'Mimi had' their original from comedy, of which at its first appearance they made a part; for their 'mimic actors' always played and exhibited grotesque dances in the comedies. The jealousy of rivalship afterwards broke them off from the comick actors, and made them a company by themselves. But to secure their reception, they borrowed from comedy all its drollery, wildness, grossness, and licentiousness. This amusement they added to their dances, and they produced what are now called farces, or burlettos. These farces had not the regularity or delicacy of comedies; they were only a succession of single scenes contrived to raise laughter; formed or unravelled without order and without connexion. They had no other end but to make the people laugh. Now and then there might be good sentences, like the sentences of P. Syrus, that are yet left us: but the ground-work was low comedy; and any thing of greater dignity drops in by chance. We must however imagine, that this odd species of the drama rose at length to somewhat a higher character, since we are told that Plato the philosopher laid the Mimi of Sophron under his pillow, and they were found there after his death. But in general we may say with truth, that it always discovered the meanness of its original, like a false pretension to nobility, in which the cheat is always discovered through the concealment of fictitious splendour.

These 'Mimi were of two sorts, of which the length was different, but the purposes the same. The Mimi of one species were short; those of the other long, and not quite so grotesque. These two kinds were subdivided into many species, distin-

guished by the dresses and characters, such as shows drunkards, physicians, men, and women.

Thus far of the Greeks. The Romans having borrowed of them the more noble shows of tragedy and comedy, were not content till they had their rhapsodies. They had their planipedes, who played with flat soles, that they might have the more agility; and their Sannions, whose head was shaved, that they might box the better. There is no need of naming here all who had a name for these diversions among the Greeks and Romans. I have said enough, and perhaps too much, of this abortion of comedy, which drew upon itself the contempt of good men, the censures of the magistrates, and the indignation of the fathers of the church*.

Another set of players were called Pantomimes: these were at least so far preferable to the former, that they gave no offence to the ears. They spoke only to the eyes; but with such art of expression, that without the utterance of a single word, they represented, as we are told, a complete tragedy or comedy, in the same manner as dumb Harlequin is exhibited on our theatres. These pantomimes among the Greeks first mingled singing with their dances; afterwards, about the time of Livius Andronicus, the songs were performed by one part, and the dances by another. Afterwards, in the time of Augustus, when they were sent for to Rome, for the diversions of the people, whom he had enslaved, they played comedies without songs

* It is the licentiousness of the Mimi and Pantomimes, against which the censure of the holy fathers particularly breaks out, as against a thing irregular and indecent, without supposing it much connected with the cause of religion.

or vocal utterance; but by the sprightliness, activity, and efficacy of their gestures; or, as Sidonius Apollinaris expresses it, *clausis faucibus, et loquente gestu*, they not only exhibited things and passions, but even the most delicate distinctions of passions, and the slightest circumstances of facts. We must not however imagine, at least in my opinion, that the Pantomimes did literally represent regular tragedies or comedies by the mere motions of their bodies. We may justly determine, notwithstanding all their agility, their representations would at last be very incomplete: yet we may suppose, with good reason, that their action was very lively; and that the art of imitation went great lengths, since it raised the admiration of the wisest men, and made the people mad with eagerness. Yet when we read that one Hylus, the pupil of one Pylades, in the time of Augustus, divided the applause of the people with his master, when they represented Oedipus, or when Juvenal tells us, that Bathillus played Leda, and other things, of the same kind, it is not easy to believe that a single man, without speaking a word, could exhibit tragedies or comedies, and make starts and bounds supply the place of vocal articulation. Notwithstanding the obscurity of this whole matter, one may know what to admit as certain, or how far a representation could be carried by dance, posture, and grimace. Among these artificial dances, of which we know nothing but the names, there was as early as the time of Aristophanes some extremely indecent. These were continued in Italy from the time of Augustus, long after the emperors. It was a publick mischief, which contributed in some mea-

sure to the decay and ruin of the Roman empire. To have a due detestation of these licentious entertainments, there is no need of any recourse to the fathers ; the wiser Pagans tell us very plainly what they thought of them. I have made this mention of the Mimi and Pantomimes, only to show how the most noble of publick spectacles were corrupted and abused, and to conduct the reader to the end through every road, and through all the by-paths of human wit, from Homer and Eschylus to our own time.

Wanderings of
the human
mind in the
birth and pro-
gress of thea-
trical represen-
tations.

VII. That we may conclude this work by applying the principles laid down at the beginning, and extend it through the whole, I desire the reader to recur to that point where I have represented the human mind as beginning the course of the drama. The chorus was first a hymn to Bacchus, produced by accident ; art brought it to perfection, and delight made it a publick diversion. Thespis made a single actor play before the people ; this was the beginning of theatrical shows. Eschylus, taking the idea of the Iliad and Odyssey, animated, if I may so express it, the epick poem, and gave a dialogue in place of simple recitation, puts the whole into action, and sets it before the eyes, as if it was a present and real transaction : he gives the chorus* an interest in the scenes, contrives habits of dignity and theatrical de-

* Eschylus, in my opinion, as well as the other poets his contemporaries, retained the chorus, not merely because it was the fashion, but because examining tragedy to the bottom, they found it not rational to conceive, that an action great and splendid, like the revolution of a state, could pass without witnesses.

corations. In a word, he gives both to tragedy ; or, more properly, draws it from the bosom of the epick poem. She made her appearance sparkling with graces, and displayed such majesty as gained every heart at the first view. Sophocles considers her more nearly, with the eyes of a critick, and finds that she has something still about her rough and swelling : he divests her of her false ornaments, teaches her a more regular walk, and more familiar dignity. Euripides was of opinion, that she ought to receive still more softness and tenderness ; he teaches her the new art of pleasing by simplicity, and gives her the charms of graceful negligence ; so that he makes her stand in suspense, whether she appears most to advantage in the dress of Sophocles sparkling with gems, or in that of Euripides, which is more simple and modest. Both indeed are elegant ; but the elegance is of different kinds, between which no judgment as yet has decided the prize of superiority.

We can now trace it no farther ; its progress amongst the Greeks is out of sight. We must pass at once to the time of Augustus, where Apollo and the Muses quitted their ancient residence in Greece, to fix their abode in Italy. But it is vain to ask questions of Melpomene ; she is obstinately silent, and we only know from strangers her power amongst the Romans. Seneca endeavours to make her speak ; but the gaudy show with which he rather loads than adorns her, makes us think that he took some phantom of Melpomene for the Muse herself.

Another flight, equally rapid with that to Rome, must carry us through thousands of years, from Rome to France. There in the time of Lewis XIV.

we see the mind of man giving birth to tragedy a second time, as if the Greek tragedy had been utterly forgot. In the place of Eschylus, we have our Rotrou. In Corneille we have another Sophocles, and in Racine a second Euripides. Thus is tragedy raised from her ashes, carried to the utmost point of greatness, and so dazzling that she prefers herself to herself. Surprised to see herself produced again in France in so short a time, and nearly in the same manner as before in Greece, she is disposed to believe that her fate is to make a short transition from her birth to her perfection, like the goddess that issued from the brain of Jupiter.

If we look back on the other side to the rise of comedy, we shall see it hatched by Margites from the *Odyssey* of Homer, in imitation of her eldest sister; but we see her under the conduct of Aristophanes become licentious and petulant, taking airs to herself which the magistrates were obliged to crush. Menander reduced her to bounds, taught her at once gaiety and politeness, and enabled her to correct vice, without shocking the offenders. Plautus, among the Romans, to whom we must now pass, united the earlier and the later comedy, and joined buffoonery with delicacy. Terence, who was better instructed, received comedy from Menander, and surpassed his original, as he endeavoured to copy it. And lastly, Moliere produced a new species of comedy, which must be placed in a class by itself, in opposition to that of Aristophanes, whose manner is likewise peculiar to himself.

But such is the weakness of the human mind, that when we review the successions of the drama a third time, we find genius falling from its height,

forgetting itself, and led astray by the love of novelty, and the desire of striking out new paths. Tragedy degenerated in Greece from the time of Aristotle, and in Rome after Augustus. At Rome and Athens comedy produced *Mimi*, pantomimes, burlettas, tricks, and farces, for the sake of variety; such is the character, and such the madness of the mind of man. It is satisfied with having made great conquests, and gives them up to attempt others, which are far from answering its expectation, and only enables it to discover its own folly, weakness, and deviations. But why should we be tired with standing still at the true point of perfection, when it is attained? If eloquence be wearied, and forgets herself a while, yet she soon returns to her former point: so will it happen to our theatres if the French muses will keep the Greek models in their view, and not look with disdain upon a stage whose mother is nature, whose soul is passion, and whose art is simplicity: a stage, which, to speak the truth, does not perhaps equal ours in splendour and elevation, but which excels it in simplicity and propriety, and equals it at least in the conduct and direction of those passions which may properly affect an honest man and a Christian.

For my part, I shall think myself well compensated for my labour, and shall attain the end which I had in view, if I shall in some little measure revive in the minds of those who purpose to run the round of polite literature, not an immoderate and blind reverence, but a true taste of antiquity: such a taste as both feeds and polishes the mind, and enriches it by enabling it to appropriate the wealth of foreigners, and to exert its natural fer-

tility in exquisite productions ; such a taste as gave the Racines, the Molieres, the Boileaus, the Fontaines, the Patrus, the Pelessons, and many other great geniuses of the last age, all that they were, and all that they will always be ; such a taste as puts the seal of immortality to those works in which it is discovered ; a taste so necessary, that without it we may be certain that the greatest powers of nature will long continue in a state below themselves ; for no man ought to allow himself to be flattered or seduced by the example of some men of genius, who have rather appeared to despise this taste than to despise it in reality. It is true that excellent originals have given occasion, without any fault of their own, to very bad copies. No man ought severely to ape either the ancients or the moderns : but if it was necessary to run into an extreme of one side or the other, which is never done by a judicious and well-directed mind, it would be better for a wit, as for a painter, to enrich himself by what he can take from the ancients, than to grow poor by taking all from his own stock ; or openly to affect an imitation of those moderns whose more fertile genius has produced beauties peculiar to themselves, and which themselves only can display with grace : beauties of that peculiar kind, that they are not fit to be imitated by others ; though in those who first invented them they may be justly esteemed, and in them only.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

TRAGEDY OF MACBETH:

WITH

REMARKS

ON SIR THOMAS HANMER'S EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXLV.

“ — As to all those things which have been published under the titles of Essays, Remarks, Observations, &c. on Shakespeare, (if you except some critical notes on Macbeth, given as a specimen of a projected edition, and written as appears by a man of parts and genius) the rest are absolutely below a serious notice.”

Warburton's Preface to Shakespeare. E. 1

NOTE I.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter three Witches.

In order to make a true estimate of the abilities and merit of a writer, it is always necessary to ex-

amine the genius of his age, and the opinions of his contemporaries. A poet who should now make the whole action of his tragedy depend upon enchantment, and produce the chief events by the assistance of supernatural agents, would be censured as transgressing the bounds of probability, he would be banished from the theatre to the nursery, and condemned to write Fairy Tales instead of Tragedies ; but a survey of the notions that prevailed at the time when this play was written, will prove that Shakespeare was in no danger of such censures, since he only turned the system that was then universally admitted to his advantage, and was far from overburthening the credulity of his audience.

The reality of witchcraft or enchantment, which, though not strictly the same, are confounded in this play, has in all ages and countries been credited by the common people, and in most by the learned themselves. These phantoms have indeed appeared more frequently, in proportion as the darkness of ignorance has been more gross ; but it cannot be shown, that the brightest gleams of knowledge have at any time been sufficient to drive them out of the world. The time in which this kind of credulity was at its height, seems to have been that of the holy war, in which the Christians imputed all their defeats to enchantment or diabolical opposition, as they ascribed their success to the assistance of their military saints ; and the learned Mr. Warburton appears to believe (Suppl. to the Introduction to *Don Quixote*) that the first accounts of enchant-

ments were brought into this part of the world by those who returned from their eastern expeditions. But there is always some distance between the birth and maturity of folly as of wickedness : this opinion had long existed, though perhaps the application of it had in no foregoing age been so frequent, nor the reception so general. Olympiodorus, in Photius's Extracts, tells us of one Libanius, who practised this kind of military magick, and having promised *χωρίς ἵπποις καὶ βασιλέας ἐργάζειν*, “to perform great things against the Barbarians without soldiers,” was, at the instances of the empress Placidia, put to death, when he was about to have given proofs of his abilities. The empress showed some kindness in her anger by cutting him off at a time so convenient for his reputation.

But a more remarkable proof of the antiquity of this notion may be found in St. Chrysostom's book *de Sacerdotio*, which exhibits a scene of enchantments not exceeded by any romance of the middle age ; he supposes a spectator, overlooking a field of battle, attended by one that points out all the various objects of horror, the engines of destruction, and the arts of slaughter. *Δεικνύτο δέ ἐτι παρὰ τοῖς ἐναρτίοις καὶ πελομένες ἵπποις διά τυνος μαγγανίαι, καὶ ἵππίτας διά ἀροφομένους, καὶ πάσην γούζελας δύναμιν καὶ ἰδεῖν.* “Let him then proceed to show him in the opposite armies horses flying by enchantment, armed men transported through the air, and every power and form of magick.” Whether St. Chrysostom believed that such performances were really to be seen in a day of battle, or only endeavoured to enliven his de-

scription, by adopting the notions of the vulgar, it is equally certain, that such notions were in his time received, and that therefore they were not imported from the Saracens in a later age ; the wars with the Saracens, however, gave occasion to their propagation, not only as bigotry naturally discovers prodigies, but as the scene of action was removed to a greater distance, and distance either of time or place is sufficient to reconcile weak minds to wonderful relations.

The reformation did not immediately arrive at its meridian, and though day was gradually increasing upon us, the goblins of witchcraft still continued to hover in the twilight. In the time of Queen Elizabeth was the remarkable trial of the witches of Warbois, whose conviction is still commemorated in an annual Sermon at Huntingdon. But in the reign of King James, in which this tragedy was written, many circumstances concurred to propagate and confirm this opinion. The king, who was much celebrated for his knowledge, had, before his arrival in England, not only examined in person a woman accused of witchcraft, but had given a very formal account of the practices and illusions of evil spirits, the compacts of witches, the ceremonies used by them, the manner of detecting them, and the justice of punishing them, in his dialogues of *Dæmonologie*, written in the Scottish dialect, and published at Edinburgh. This book was, soon after his accession, reprinted at London ; and as the ready way to gain King James's favour was to flatter his speculations, the

system of Daemonologie was immediately adopted by all who desired either to gain preferment or not to lose it. Thus the doctrine of witchcraft was very powerfully inculcated, and as the greatest part of mankind have no other reason for their opinions than that they are in fashion, it cannot be doubted but this persuasion made a rapid progress, since vanity and credulity co-operated in its favour, and it had a tendency to free cowardice from reproach. The infection soon reached the parliament, who, in the first year of King James, made a law, by which it was enacted, ch. xii. That “if any person shall use any invocation or conjuration of any evil or wicked spirit; 2. Or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil or cursed spirit to or for any intent or purpose; 3. Or take up any dead man, woman, or child out of the grave,—or the skin, bone, or any part of the dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; 4. Or shall use, practise or exercise any sort of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; 5. Whereby any person shall be destroyed, killed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in any part of the body; 6. That every such person, being convicted, shall suffer death.”

Thus, in the time of Shakespeare, was the doctrine of witchcraft at once established by law and by the fashion, and it became not only unpolite, but criminal, to doubt it; and as prodigies are always seen in proportion as they are expected, witches were every day discovered, and multiplied

so fast in some places, that bishop Hall mentions a village in Lancashire, where their number was greater than that of the houses. The Jesuits and Sectaries took advantage of this universal error, and endeavoured to promote the interest of their parties by pretended cures of persons afflicted by evil spirits, but they were detected and exposed by the clergy of the established church.

Upon this general infatuation Shakespeare might be easily allowed to found a play, especially since he has followed with great exactness such histories as were then thought true; nor can it be doubted that the scenes of enchantment, however they may now be ridiculed, were both by himself and his audience thought awful and affecting.

NOTE II.

S C E N E II.

— THE merciless Macdonel,—from the Western Isles

Of *Kerns* and *Gallow-glasses* was supply'd,
And fortune on his damned *quarry* smiling;
Show'd like a rebel's whore.

Kerns are light-armed, and *Gallow-glasses* heavy-armed soldiers. The word *quarry* has no sense that is properly applicable in this place, and therefore it is necessary to read,

And fortune on his damned quarrel smiling.

Quarrel was formerly used for *cause*, or for *the*

occasion of a quarrel, and is to be found in that sense in Hollingshead's account of the story of Macbeth, who, upon the creation of the prince of Cumberland, thought, says the historian, that he had *a just quarrel* to endeavour after the crown. The sense therefore is *fortune smiling on his execrable cause, &c.*

NOTE III.

If I say sooth, I must report they were
 As cannons overcharged with double cracks,
 So they redoubled strokes upon the foe.

Mr. Theobald has endeavoured to improve the sense of this passage by altering the punctuation thus :

— They
 As cannons overcharg'd, with double cracks
 So they redoubled strokes —

He declares, with some degree of exultation, that he has no idea of *a cannon charged with double cracks*; but surely the great author will not gain much by an alteration which makes him say of a hero, that he *redoubles strokes with double cracks*, an expression not more loudly to be applauded, or more easily pardoned, than that which is rejected in its favour. That *a cannon is charged with thunder* or *with double thunders* may be written,

not only without nonsense, but with elegance ; and nothing else is here meant by *cracks*, which in the time of this writer was a word of such emphasis and dignity, that in this play he terms the general dissolution of nature the *crack of doom*.

There are among Mr. Theobald's alterations others which I do not approve, though I do not always censure them ; for some of his amendments are so excellent, that, even when he has failed, he ought to be treated with indulgence and respect.

NOTE IV.

King. But who comes here ?

Mal. The worthy Thane of Rosse.

Lenox. What haste looks through his eyes ?
So should he look, that *seems* to speak things
strange.

The meaning of this passage as it now stands is, *so should he look, that looks as if he told things strange.* But Rosse neither yet told strange things, nor could look as if he told them ; Lenox only conjectured from his air that he had strange things to tell, and therefore undoubtedly said

— What haste looks thro' his eyes ?
So should he look, that *teems* to speak things strange.

He looks like one that is big with something of

importance, a metaphor so natural, that it is every day used in common discourse.

NOTE V.

S C E N E . III.

Thunder. Enter the three Witches.

1st Witch. WHERE hast thou been, sister?

2d Witch. Killing swine.

3d Witch. Sister, where thou?

1st Witch. A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,

And mouncht, and mouncht, and mouncht. Give me, quoth I.

(1) Aroint thee, witch, the rump-fed ronyon cries.

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' th' Tiger:

But in a sieve I'll thither sail,

And like a rat without a tail,

I'll do—I'll do—and I'll do.

2d Witch. I'll give thee a wind.

1st Witch. Thou art kind.

3d Witch. And I another.

1st Witch. I myself have all the other,

And the (2) very points they blow,

All the quarters that they know,

I' th' Ship-man's card—

I will drain him dry as hay ;
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his pent-house lid ;
He shall live a man (3) forbid ;
Weary sev'n-nights nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine :
Tho' his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost.
Look what I have.

2d *Witch.* Show me, show me.

(1) *Aroint thee, witch, — —*

In one of the folio editions the reading is *anoint thee*, in a sense very consistent with the common accounts of witches, who are related to perform many supernatural acts by the means of unghents, and particularly to fly through the air to the places where they meet at their hellish festivals. In this sense *anoint thee, witch*, will mean, *away, witch, to your infernal assembly*. This reading I was inclined to favour, because I had met with the word *aroint* in no other place ; till looking into Hearne's Collections, I found it in a very old drawing, that he has published, in which St. Patrick is represented visiting hell, and putting the devils into great confusion by his presence, of whom one that is driving the damned before him with a prong, has a label issuing out from his mouth with these words, *out out arongt*, of which the last is evidently the same with *aroint*, and used in the same sense as in this passage.

(2) And the *very* points they blow.

As the word *very* is here of no other use than to fill up the verse, it is likely that Shakespeare wrote *various*, which might be easily mistaken for *very*, being either negligently read, hastily pronounced, or imperfectly heard.

(3) He shall live a man *forbid*.

Mr. Theobald has very justly explained *forbid* by *accursed*, but without giving any reason of his interpretation. To *bid* is originally *to pray*, as in this Saxon fragment.

þe is þis þit ȝ bote, &c.

He is wise that *prays* & improves.

As to *forbid* therefore implies to *prohibit*, in opposition to the word *bid* in its present sense, it signifies by the same kind of opposition to *curse*, when it is derived from the same word in its primitive meaning.

NOTE VI.

S C E N E V.

THE incongruity of all the passages in which the Thane of Cawdor is mentioned is very remarkable; in the second scene the Thanes of Rosse and Angus bring the king an account of the battle, and inform him that Norway

Assisted by that most disloyal traytor
The Thane of Cawdor, 'gan a dismal conflict.

It appears that Cawdor was taken prisoner, for the king says in the same scene,

—Go, pronounce his death,
And with his former title greet Macbeth.

Yet though Cawdor was thus taken by Macbeth, in arms against his king, when Macbeth is saluted, in the fourth scene, *Thane of Cawdor*, by the Weird Sisters, he asks,

How of Cawdor? the *Thane of Cawdor lives,*
A prosp'rous gentleman.—

And in the next line considers the promises, that he should be *Cawdor* and *king*, as equally unlikely to be accomplished. How can Macbeth be ignorant of the state of the Thane of Cawdor, whom he has just defeated and taken prisoner, or call him a *prosperous gentleman* who has forfeited his title and life by open rebellion? Or why should he wonder that the title of the rebel whom he has overthrown should be conferred upon him? He cannot be supposed to dissemble his knowledge of 'the condition of Cawdor, because he inquires with all the ardour of curiosity, and the vehemence of sudden astonishment; and because nobody is present but Banquo, who had an equal part in the battle, and was equally acquainted with Cawdor's treason. However, in the

next scene, his ignorance still continues; and, when Rosse and Angus present him from the king with his new title, he cries out

——— The Thane of Cawdor lives.

Why do you dress me in his borrowed robes?

Rosse and Angus, who were the messengers that in the second scene informed the king of the assistance given by Cawdor to the invader, having lost, as well as Macbeth, all memory of what they had so lately seen and related, make this answer,

——— Whether he was

Combin'd with Norway, or did line the rebels
With hidden help and vantage, or with both
He labour'd in his country's wreck, I know not.

Neither Rosse knew what he had just reported, nor Macbeth what he had just done. This seems not to be one of the faults that are to be imputed to the transcribers, since, though the inconsistency of Rosse and Angus might be removed, by supposing that their names are erroneously inserted, and that only Rosse brought the account of the battle, and only Angus was sent to compliment Macbeth, yet the forgetfulness of Macbeth cannot be palliated, since what he says could not have been spoken by any other.

NOTE VII.

THE thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man,——

The *single state of man* seems to be used by Shakespeare for an *individual*, in opposition to a *commonwealth*, or *conjunct body* of men.

NOTE VIII.

Macbeth.—Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs thro' the roughest day.

I suppose every reader is disgusted at the tautology in this passage, *time and the hour*, and will therefore willingly believe that Shakespeare wrote it thus,

— Come what come may,
Time! on!—the hour runs thro' the roughest day.

Macbeth is deliberating upon the events which are to befall him ; but finding no satisfaction from his own thoughts, he grows impatient of reflection, and resolves to wait the close without harassing himself with conjectures,

— Come what come may.

But to shorten the pain of suspense, he calls upon time in the usual style of ardent desire, to quicken his motion,

Time! on!—

He then comforts himself with the reflection that all his perplexity must have an end,

— The hour runs thro' the roughest day.

This conjecture is supported by the passage in the letter to his lady, in which he says, *They referr'd me to the coming on of time with Hail King that shall be.*

NOTE IX.

SCENE VI.

Malcolm. —— NOTHING in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died,
As one that had been studied in his death,
To throw away the dearest thing he o'w'd,
As 'twere a careless trifle.

As the word *o'w'd* affords here no sense but such as is forced and unnatural, it cannot be doubted that it was originally written, *The dearest thing he own'd*; a reading which needs neither defence nor explication.

NOTE X.

King. —— THERE'S no art,
To find the mind's construction in the face.

The *construction of the mind* is, I believe, a phrase peculiar to Shakespeare; it implies the *frame* or *disposition* of the mind, by which it is determined to good or ill.

NOTE XI.

Macbeth.—THE service, and the loyalty I owe,
 In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
 Is to receive our duties, and our duties
 Are to your throne and state, children and servants,
 Which do but what they should, in doing *everything*
Safe tow'rds your love and honour.

Of the last line of this speech, which is certainly, as it is now read, unintelligible, an emendation has been attempted, which Mr. Warburton and Mr. Theobald have admitted as the true reading.

— Our duties
 Are to your throne and state, children and servants,
 Which do but what they should, in doing *everything*
Fiefs to your love and honour.

My esteem of these criticks inclines me to believe, that they cannot be much pleased with the expressions *Fiefs to love*, or *Fiefs to honour*; and that they have proposed this alteration rather because no other occurred to them, than because they approved it. I shall therefore propose a bolder change, perhaps with no better success, but *sua cuique placent*. I read thus,

— Our duties
 Are to your throne and state, children and servants,

Which do but what they should, in doing *nothing*
Save tow'rd your love and honour.

We do but perform our duty when we contract
 all our views to your service, when we act with *no other* principle than regard to *your love and honour.*

It is probable that this passage was first corrupted
 by writing *safe* for *save*, and the lines then stood
 thus,

— Doing nothing
 Safe tow'rd your love and honour.

Which the next transcriber observing to be wrong,
 and yet not being able to discover the real fault,
 altered to the present reading.

NOTE XII.

S C E N E VII

— Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
 That which cries, “ thus thou must do if thou
 have *it*,
 “ And that,” &c.

As the object of Macbeth's desire is here introduced speaking of itself, it is necessary to read,

— Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
 That which cries, “ thus thou must do if thou
 have *me*.”

NOTE XIII.

— HIE thee hither,
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
 And chastise with the valour of my tongue
 All that impedes thee from the golden round,
 That fate and metaphysical aid do *seem*
 To have thee crown'd withal.

For *seem* the sense evidently directs us to read *seek*. The crown to which fate destines thee, and which preternatural agents *endeavour* to bestow upon thee. The *golden round* is the *diadem*.

NOTE XIV.

Lady Macbeth. — COME all you spirits
 That tend on *mortal thoughts*, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to th' toe, top-full
 Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,
 Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctionous visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor *keep peace* between
 Th' effect and it.

Mortal thoughts.

This expression signifies not *the thoughts of mortals*, but, *murtherous, deadly, or destructive designs*. So in act 5th,

Hold fast the *mortal sword*.

And in another place,
With twenty *mortal* murthers.

— Nor keep peace between
Th' effect and it.

The intent of Lady Macbeth evidently is to wish that no womanish tenderness, or conscientious remorse, may hinder her purpose from proceeding to effect; but neither this nor indeed any other sense is expressed by the present reading, and therefore it cannot be doubted that Shakespeare wrote differently, perhaps thus :

That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor *keep pace* between
Th' effect and it.

To *keep pace between* may signify *to pass between*, to *intervene*. *Pace* is on many occasions a favourite of Shakespeare. This phrase is indeed not usual in this sense, but was it not its novelty that gave occasion to the present corruption?

NOTE XV.

S C E N E VIII.

King. This castle hath a pleasant *seat*; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Banquo. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting Martlet, does approve,

By his lov'd mansionary, that heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here. No jutting frieze,
Buttrice, nor coigne of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant
cradle :

Where they most breed and haunt, I have ob-
serv'd

The air is delicate.

In this short scene, I propose a slight alteration
to be made, by substituting *site* for *seat*, as the
ancient word for *situation*; and *sense* for *senses*, as
more agreeable to the measure; for which reason
likewise I have endeavoured to adjust this passage,

— Heaven's breath

Smells wooingly here. No jutting frieze,

By changing the punctuation and adding a syllable
thus,

— Heaven's breath

Smells wooingly. Here is no jutting frieze.

Those who have perused books printed at the
time of the first editions of Shakespeare know, that
greater alterations than these are necessary almost
in every page, even where it is not to be doubted
that the copy was correct.

NOTE XVI.

S C E N E X.

THE arguments by which Lady Macbeth per-
suades her husband to commit the murder, afford a
proof of Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature.

She urges the excellence and dignity of courage, a glittering idea which has dazzled mankind from age to age, and animated sometimes the house-breaker, and sometimes the conqueror: but this sophism Macbeth has for ever destroyed by distinguishing true from false fortitude, in a line and a half; of which it may almost be said, that they ought to bestow immortality on the author, though all his other productions had been lost.

I dare do all that may become a man,
Who dares do more is none.

This topick, which has been always employed with too much success, is used in this scene with peculiar propriety, to a soldier by a woman. Courage is the distinguishing virtue of a soldier, and the reproach of cowardice cannot be borne by any man from a woman, without great impatience.

She then urges the oaths by which he had bound himself to murder Duncan, another art of sophistry by which men have sometimes deluded their consciences, and persuaded themselves that what would be criminal in others is virtuous in them; this argument Shakespeare, whose plan obliged him to make Macbeth yield, has not confuted, though he might easily have shown that a former obligation could not be vacated by a latter.

NOTE XVII.

LETTING *I dare not*, wait upon *I would*,
Like the poor cat i' th' adage. :)

The adage alluded to is, *The cat loves fish, but dares not wet her foot.*

Catus amat pisces, sed non vult tingere plantas.

NOTE XVIII.

WILL I with wine and wassel so *convince*.

To *convince* is in Shakespeare to *over-power* or *subdue*, as in this play,

— Their malady *convincs*
The great assay of art.

NOTE XIX.

— Who shall bear the guilt
Of our great *quell*.

Quell is *murder*, *manquellers* being in the old language the term for which *murderers* is now used.

NOTE XX.

ACT II. SCENE II.

— Now o'er one half the world
(1) *Nature seems dead*, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecat's offerings: and wither'd murder,

(Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf, "
 Whose howl's his watch) thus with his stealthy
 pace,
With (2) Tarquin's ravishing sides, tow'rds his
design
 Moves like a ghost—Thou sound and firm-set
 earth,
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
 Thy very stones prate of my where about,
And (3) take the present horror from the time,
That now suits with it.—

(1) —— Now o'er one half the world
 Nature seems dead.

That is, over our *hemisphere all action and motion seem to have ceased*. This image, which is perhaps the most striking that poetry can produce, has been adopted by Dryden in his conquest of Mexico.

All things are hush'd as nature's self lay dead,
 The mountains seem to nod their drowsy head ;
 The little birds in dreams their songs repeat,
 And sleeping flow'rs beneath the night-dews sweat.
 Even lust and envy sleep !

These lines, though so well known, I have transcribed, that the contrast between them and this passage of Shakespeare may be more accurately observed.

Night is described by two great poets, but one describes a night of quiet, the other of perturbation. In the night of Dryden, all the disturbers of the world are laid asleep ; in that of Shakespeare,

nothing but sorcery, lust, and murder is awake. He that reads Dryden, finds himself lulled with serenity, and disposed to solitude and contemplation. He that peruses Shakespeare, looks round alarmed, and starts to find himself alone. One is the night of a lover, the other that of a murderer.

(2) —— *Wither'd murder.*

— *Thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing sides tow'rd his design,
Moves like a ghost.* —

This was the reading of this passage in all the editions before that of Mr. Pope, who for *sides*, inserted in the text *strides*, which Mr. Theobald has tacitly copied from him, though a more proper alteration might perhaps have been made. A *ravishing stride* is an action of violence, impetuosity, and tumult, like that of a savage rushing on his prey; whereas the poet is here attempting to exhibit an image of secrecy and caution, of anxious circumspection and guilty timidity, the *stealthy pace* of a *ravisher* creeping into the chamber of a virgin, and of an assassin approaching the bed of him whom he proposes to murder, without awaking him; these he describes as *moving like ghosts*, whose progression is so different from *strides*, that it has been in all ages represented to be, as Milton expresses it,

Smooth sliding without step.

This hemistick will afford the true reading of this place, which is, I think, to be corrected thus:

— And wither'd murder,
 — Thus with his stealthy pace,
 With *Tarquin* ravishing, slides tow'rd his design,
 Moves like a ghost.

· *Tarquin* is in this place the general name of a ravisher, and the sense is, Now is the time in which every one is a-sleep, but those who are employed in wickedness, the witch who is sacrificing to Hecate, and the ravisher and the murderer, who, like me, are stealing upon their prey.

When the reading is thus adjusted, he wishes with great propriety, in the following lines, that the earth may not *hear his steps*.

(3) And take the present horror from the time
 That now suits with it.

I believe every one that has attentively read this dreadful soliloquy is disappointed at the conclusion, which, if not wholly unintelligible, is, at least, obscure, nor can be explained into any sense worthy of the author. I shall therefore propose a slight alteration.

—Thou sound and firm-set earth,
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
 Thy very stones prate of my where-about,
 And talk—the present horror of the time!—
 That now suits with it—

Macbeth has, in the foregoing lines, disturbed his imagination by enumerating all the terrors of the night; at length he is wrought up to a degree of frenzy, that makes him afraid of some supernatural discovery of his design, and calls out to the stones not to betray him, not to declare where he

walks, nor *to talk*.—As he is going to say of what, he discovers the absurdity of his suspicion and causes, but is again o'erwhelmed by his guilt, and concludes, that such are the horrors of the present night, that the stones may be expected to cry out against him.

That now suits with it.

He observes in a subsequent passage, that on such occasions *stones have been known to move*. It is now very just and strong picture of a man about to commit a deliberate murder under the strongest convictions of the wickedness of his design.

NOTE XXI.

SCENE IV.

Lenox. The night has been unruly; where we lay
Our chimneys were blown down. And, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' th' air, strange screams of
death,

And prophecying with accents terrible
Of dire combustions, and confused events,
New-hatch'd to the woful time.

The obscure bird clamour'd the live-long night,
Some say the earth was fev'rous and did shake.

These lines I think should be rather regulated
thus:

— Prophecying with accents terrible,
Of dire combustions and confused events.
New-hatch'd to th' woful time, the obscure bird
Clamour'd the live-long night. Some say the earth
was fev'rous and did shake.

A prophecy of an event new-hatch'd, seems to be a prophecy of an event past. The term *new-hatch'd* is properly applicable to a *bird*, and that birds of ill omen should be *new-hatch'd to the woful time*, is very consistent with the rest of the prodigies here mentioned, and with the universal disorder into which nature is described as thrown, by the perpetration of this horrid murder.

NOTE XXII.

—Up! Up! and see
The great doom's image Malcolm, Banquo,
As from your graves rise up.—

The second line might have been so easily completed, that it cannot be supposed to have been left imperfect by the author, who probably wrote,

—Malcolm! Banquo! rise!
As from your graves rise up.—

Many other emendations of the same kind might be made, without any greater deviation from the printed copies, than is found in each of them from the rest.

NOTE XXIII.

Macbeth.—HERE lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature,
For ruin's wasteful entrance; there the murthierers
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers
Unmannerly breech'd with gore :—

An *unmannerly dagger* and a *dagger breeched*, or as in some editions *breach'd with gore*, are expressions not easily to be understood, nor can it be imagined that Shakespeare would reproach the murderer of his king only with *want of manners*. There are undoubtedly two faults in this passage, which I have endeavoured to take away by reading,

— *Daggers*

Unmanly drench'd with gore. —

I saw drench'd with the king's blood the fatal daggers, not only instruments of murder but evidences of cowardice.

Each of these words might easily be confounded with that which I have substituted for it by a hand not exact, a casual blot, or a negligent inspection.

Mr. Pope has endeavoured to improve one of these lines, by substituting *goary blood* for *golden blood*, but it may easily be admitted, that he who could on such an occasion talk of *lacing the silver skin* would *lace it with golden blood*. No amendment can be made to this line, of which every word is equally faulty, but by a general blot.

It is not improbable, that Shakespeare put these forced and unnatural metaphors into the mouth of Macbeth, as a mark of artifice and dissimulation, to show the difference between the studied language of hypocrisy, and the natural outcries of sudden passion. This whole speech, considered in this light, is a remarkable instance of judgment, as it consists entirely of antitheses and metaphors.

NOTE XXIV.

ACT III. SCENE II.

Macbeth. — O'er fears in Banquo
 Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
 Reigns that which would be fear'd. 'Tis much he
 dares,

And to that dauntless temper of his mind,
 He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
 To act in safety. There is none but he,
 Whose being I do fear: and under him,
 My genius is rebuk'd; (1) as it is said
Anthony's treason by Caesar. He chid the sisters,
 When first they put the name of king upon me,
 And bade them speak to him; then prophet-like,
 They hail'd him father to a line of kings,
 Upon my head they place'd a fruitless crown,
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
 No son of mine succeeding. If 'tis so,
 For Banquo's issue have I 'slid my mind,
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murther'd,
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
 Only for them, and mine eternal jewel
 Given to the (2) common enemy of man,
 To make them kings,—the seed of Banquo kings.
 Rather than so, come fate into the list,
 (3) And champion me to th' utterance — — —

(1) —— As it is said,
Anthony's was by Cæsar.

Though I would not often assume the critick's privilege, of being confident where certainty cannot be obtained, nor indulge myself too far in departing from the established reading ; yet I cannot but propose the rejection of this passage, which I believe was an insertion of some player, that having so much learning as to discover to what Shakespeare alluded, was not willing that his audience should be less knowing than himself, and has therefore weakened the author's sense by the intrusion of a remote and useless image into a speech bursting from a man wholly possessed with his own present condition, and therefore not at leisure to explain his own allusions to himself. If these words are taken away, by which not only the thought but the numbers are injured, the lines of Shakespeare close together without any traces of a breach.

My genius is rebuk'd. He chid the sisters.

(2) —— The common enemy of man.

It is always an entertainment to an inquisitive reader, to trace a sentiment to its original source, and therefore, though the term *enemy of man* applied to the devil is in itself natural and obvious, yet some may be pleased with being informed, that Shakespeare probably borrowed it from the first lines of the *Destruction of Troy*, a book which he is known to have read.

That this remark may not appear too trivial, I shall take occasion from it to point out a beautiful passage of Milton, evidently copied from a book of no greater authority: in describing the gates of hell, book ii. v. 879, he says,

"

— On a sudden open fly,

With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,

Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder.

In the history of Don Bellianis, when one of the knights approaches, as I remember, the castle of Brandezar, the gates are said to open *grating harsh thunder upon their brasen hinges*.

(8) — Come fate into the lists,
And champion me to th' utterance. —

This passage will be best explained by translating it into the language from whence the only word of difficulty in it is borrowed. *Que la destinée se rende en lice, et qu'elle me donne un défi à l'outrance.* A challenge or a combat *a l'outrance, to extremity*, was a fixed term in the law of arms, used when the combatants engaged with an *odium inter-necinum, an intention to destroy each other*, in opposition to trials of skill at festivals, or on other occasions, where the contest was only for reputation or a prize. The sense therefore is, *Let fate, that has fore-doom'd the exaltation of the sons of Banquo, enter the lists against me, with the utmost*

animosity, in defence of its own decrees, which I will endeavour to invalidate, whatever be the danger.

NOTE XXV.

Macbeth. Ay, in the catalogue, ye go for men,
As hounds and grey-hounds, mongrels, spaniels,
curs,
Shoughs, water-ruggs, and demy-wolves are clept
All by the name of dogs.

Though this is not the most sparkling passage in the play, and though the name of a dog is of no great importance, yet it may not be improper to remark, that there is no such species of dogs as *shoughs* mentioned by Caius de Canibus Britannicus, or any other writer that has fallen into my hands, nor is the word to be found in any dictionary which I have examined. I therefore imagined that it is falsely printed for *sloughs*, a kind of slow hound bred in the southern parts of England, but was informed by a lady, that it is more probably used, either by mistake, or according to the orthography of that time, for *shocks*.

NOTE XXVI.

Macbeth. — In this hour at most,
I will advise you where to plant yourselves,
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' th' time,
The moment on't, for't must be done to-night,
And something from the palace: —

What is meant by *the spy of the time*, it will be found difficult to explain; and therefore sense will be cheaply gained by a slight alteration.—Macbeth is assuring the assassins that they shall not want directions to find Banquo, and therefore says,

I will ——

Acquaint you with a perfect spy o' th' time.

Accordingly a third murderer joins them afterwards at the place of action.

Perfect is well instructed, or well informed, as in this play,

Though in your state of honour I am *perfect*.

Though I am well acquainted with your quality and rank.

NOTE XXVII.

SCENE IV.

2d Murderer. He needs not to mistrust, since he delivers
Our offices and what we have to do,
To the direction just.

Mr. Theobald has endeavoured unsuccessfully to amend this passage, in which nothing is faulty but the punctuation. The meaning of this abrupt dialogue is this. The *perfect spy*, mentioned by

Macbeth in the foregoing scene, has, before they enter upon the stage, given them the directions which were promised at the time of their agreement; and therefore one of the murderers observes, that, since *he has given them such exact information, he needs not doubt of their performance.* Then by way of exhortation to his associates he cries out

— To the direction just.

Now nothing remains but that we conform exactly to Macbeth's directions.

NOTE XXVIII.

SCENE V.

Macbeth. You know your own degrees, sit down:

At first and last the hearty welcome.

As this passage stands, not only the numbers are very imperfect, but the sense, if any can be found, weak and contemptible. The numbers will be improved by reading

— Sit down at first,
And last a hearty welcome.

But for *last* should then be written *next.* I believe the true reading is

You know your own degrees, sit down.—To first
And last the hearty welcome.

All of whatever degree, from the highest to the lowest, may be assured that their visit is well received.

NOTE XXIX.

Macbeth. — THERE 's blood upon thy face.

[*To the murtherer aside at the door.*

Murderer. 'Tis Banquo's then.

Macbeth. 'Tis better *thee* without, than *he* within.

The sense apparently requires that this passage should be read thus :

'Tis better *thee* without, than *him* within.

That is, *I am more pleased that the blood of Banquo should be on thy face, than in his body.*

NOTE XXX.

Lady Macbeth. PROPER stuff.

This is the very painting of your fear :

{ *Aside to Macbeth.*

This is the air-drawn dagger which you said
Led you to Duncan. Oh, these flaws and starts,
Impostures to true fear, would well become
A woman's story at a winter's fire,
Authoriz'd by her grandam. Shame itself! ·
Why do you make such faces? When all 's done
You look but on a stool.

As *starts* can neither with propriety nor sense be called *impostures to true fear*, something else was undoubtedly intended by the author, who perhaps wrote

— Those flaws and starts,
Impostures true to fear, would well become
 A woman's story, —

These symptoms of terror and amazement might better become *impostures true only to fear, might become a coward at the recital of such falsehoods as no man could credit whose understanding was not weakened by his terrors; tales told by a woman over a fire on the authority of her grandam.*

NOTE XXXI.

Macbeth. — Love and health to all !
 Then I'll sit down: give me some wine, fill full—
 I drink to th' general joy of the whole table,
 And to our dear friend Banquo whom we miss,
 Would he were here ! to all, and him, we thirst,
And all to all.

Though this passage is, as it now stands, capable of more meanings than one, none of them are very satisfactory; and therefore I am inclined to read it thus :

— To all, and him, we thirst,
 And hail to all.

Macbeth, being about to salute his company with a bumper, declares that he includes Banquo, though absent, in this act of kindness; and wishes *health* to all. *Hail* or *heil* for *health* was in such continual use among the good-fellows of ancient times, that a drinker was called a *was-heiler*, or a *wisher of health*, and the liquor was termed *was-heil*, because *health* was so often *wished* over it. Thus in the lines of Hanvil the Monk,

Jamque vagante scypho, discincto gutture was-heil

*Ingeminant was-heil: labor est plus perdere vini
Quam sitis.* ——

These words were afterwards corrupted into *wassail* and *wassailer*.

NOTE XXXII.

Macbeth. —— CAN such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud
Without our special wonder? You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights,
And keep the natural ruby of your cheek,
When mine is blanched with fear.

This passage, as it now stands, is unintelligible, but may be restored to sense by a very slight alteration,

— You make me strange
Ev'n to the disposition that I know.

Though I had before seen many instances of your

courage, yet it now appears in a degree altogether new. So that my long acquaintance with your disposition does not hinder me from that astonishment which novelty produces.

NOTE XXXIII.

It will have blood, they say blood will have blood,
Stones have been known to move, and trees to
speak,

Augurs, that understood relations, have
By magpies, and by choughs, and rooks brought
forth

The secret'st man of blood.—

In this passage the first line loses much of its force by the present punctuation. Macbeth having considered the prodigy which has just appeared, infers justly from it, that the death of Duncan cannot pass unpunished,

It will have blood,—

Then after a short pause, declares it as the general observation of mankind, that murderers cannot escape.

— *They say, blood will have blood.*

Murderers, when they have practised all human means of security, are detected by supernatural directions.

Augurs, that understand relations, &c.

By the word *relation* is understood the *connection* of effects with causes ; to *understand relations* as an *augur* is to know how those things *relate to* each other which have no visible combination or dependence.

NOTE XXXIV.

SCENE VII.

Enter Lenox and another Lord.

As this tragedy like the rest of Shakespeare's is perhaps overstocked with personages, it is not easy to assign a reason, why a nameless character should be introduced here, since nothing is said that might not with equal propriety have been put into the mouth of any other disaffected man. I believe, therefore, that in the original copy, it was written with a very common form of contraction, *Lenox* and *An.* for which the transcriber instead of *Lenox* and *Angus*, set down *Lenox* and *another Lord*. The author had indeed been more indebted to the transcriber's fidelity and diligence, had he committed no errors of greater importance.

NOTE XXXV.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

As this is the chief scene of enchantment in the play, it is proper in this place to observe, with how much judgment Shakespeare has selected all the circumstances of his infernal ceremonies, and how exactly he has conformed to common opinions and traditions.

'Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

The usual form in which familiar spirits are reported to converse with witches, is that of a cat. A

witch, who was tried about half a century before the time of Shakespeare, had a cat named Rutterkin, as the spirit of one of those witches was Grimalkin ; and when any mischief was to be done, she used to bid Rutterkin *go and fly* ; but once when she would have sent Rutterkin to torment a daughter of the countess of Rutland, instead of *going* or *flying*, he only cried *mew*, from which she discovered that the lady was out of his power, the power of witches being not universal, but limited, as Shakespeare has taken care to inculcate.

Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest tost.

The common afflictions which the malice of witches produced were melancholy, fits, and loss of flesh, which are threatened by one of Shakespeare's witches.

Weary sev'nights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.

It was likewise their practice to destroy the cattle of their neighbours, and the farmers have to this day many ceremonies to secure their cows and other cattle from witchcraft ; but they seem to have been most suspected of malice against swine. Shakespeare has accordingly made one of his witches declare that she has been *killing swine* ; and Dr. Harsenet observes, that about that time, *a sow could not be ill of the measles, nor a girl of the sullens, but some old woman was charged with witchcraft*.

Toad, that under the cold stone
Days and nights has forty-one

Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' th' charmed pot.

Toads have likewise long lain under the reproach of being by some means accessory to witchcraft, for which reason Shakespeare, in the first scene of this play, calls one of the spirits *paddocke* or *toad*, and now takes care to put a toad first into the pot. When Vaninus was seized at Thoulouse, there was found at his lodgings *ingens bufo vitro inclusus*, a great toad shut in a vial, upon which those that prosecuted him *veneficium exprobrabant, charged him*, I suppose, *with witchcraft*.

Fillet of a fenny snake
In the cauldron boil and bake ;
Eye of neut, and toe of frog ;—
For a charm, &c.

The propriety of these ingredients may be known by consulting the books *de Viribus Animalium* and *de Mirabilibus Mundi*, ascribed to *Albertus Magnus*, in which the reader, who has time and credulity, may discover very wonderful secrets.

Finger of birth-strangled babe,
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab ;—

It has been already mentioned in the law against witches, that they are supposed to take up dead bodies to use in enchantments, which was confessed by the woman whom King James examined, and who had of a dead body, that was divided in one of their assemblies, two fingers for her share. It is observable that Shakespeare, on this great occasion,

which involves the fate of a king, multiplies all the circumstances of horror. The babe whose finger is used, must be strangled in its birth, the grease must not only be human, but must have dropped from a gibbet, the gibbet of a murderer, and even the sow whose blood is used must have offended nature by devouring her own farrow. These are touches of judgment and genius.

And now about the cauldron sing—

Blue spirits and white,
Black spirits and grey
Mingle, mingle, mingle,
You that mingle may.

And in a former part,

Weird sisters hand in hand—
Thus do go about, about
Thrice to mine, and thrice to thine
And thrice again to make up nine.

These two passages I have brought together, because they both seem subject to the objection of too much levity for the solemnity of enchantment, and may both be shown, by one quotation from Camden's account of Ireland, to be founded upon a practice really observed by the uncivilised natives of that country. "When any one gets a fall, says the informer of Camden, he starts up, and *turning three times to the right*, digs a hole in the earth; for they imagine that there is a spirit in the ground; and if he falls sick in two or three days, they send one of

their women that is skilled in that way to the place, where she says, 'I call thee from the east, west, north, and south, from the groves, the woods, the rivers, and the fens, from the *fairies, red, black, white.*' There was likewise a book written before the time of Shakespeare, describing, amongst other properties, the colours of spirits.

Many other circumstances might be particularised, in which Shakespeare has shown his judgment and his knowledge.

NOTE XXXVI.

SCENE II.

Macbeth. Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo,
down,
Thy crown does (1) sear my eye-balls, and thy (2)
hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first,
A third is like the former.—

(1) The expression of Macbeth, that the *crown sears his eye-balls*, is taken from the method formerly practised of destroying the sight of captives or competitors, by holding a burning bason before the eye, which dried up its humidity.

(2) As Macbeth expected to see a train of kings, and was only inquiring from what race they would proceed, he could not be surprised that the *hair* of the second was *bound with gold* like that of the first; he was offended only that the second resembled the first, as the first resembled Banquo, and therefore said,

— And thy *air*,
 Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.

NOTE XXXVII.

I WILL—give to the edge o' th' sword
 His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
 That *trace him in his line*—no boasting like a fool,
 This deed I'll do before my purpose cool.

Both the sense and measure of the third line,
 which, as it rhymes, ought, according to the practice
 of this author, to be regular, are at present
 injured by two superfluous syllables, which may
 easily be removed by reading

— souls,
 That trace his line—no boasting like a fool.

NOTE XXXVIII.

SCENE III.

Rosse. DEAREST cousin,
 I pray you school yourself; but for your husband,
 He's noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
 The fits o' th' time, I dare not speak much farther,
 But cruel are the times when we are traitors,
 And do not know't ourselves: when we (1) *hold*
rumour

From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
 But float upon a wild and violent sea
 Each way, and (2) *move*. I'll take my leave of you;

Shall not be long but I'll be here again :
 Things at the worst will cease, or else climb up-
 wards

To what they were before : my pretty cousin,
 Blessing upon you.

(1) —— When we hold rumour
 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear.

The present reading seems to afford no sense ;
 and therefore some critical experiments may be
 properly tried upon it, though, the verses being
 without any connexion, there is room for suspicion
 that some intermediate lines are lost, and that the
 passage is therefore irretrievable. If it be supposed
 that the fault arises only from the corruption of
 some words, and that the traces of the true reading
 are still to be found, the passage may be changed
 thus :

— When we *bode ruin*
 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear.

Or in a sense very applicable to the occasion of
 the conference,

— When the *bold running*
 From what they fear, yet know not what they fear.

(2) But float upon a wild and violent sea
 Each way, and move.

That he who *floats* upon a *rough sea* must *move*
 is evident, too evident for Shakespeare so emphati-
 cally to assert. The line therefore is to be written
 thus :

Each way, and move—I'll take my leave of you.

Rosse is about to proceed, but finding himself overpowered by his tenderness, breaks off abruptly, for which he makes a short apology and retires.

NOTE XXXIX.

SCENE IV.

Malcolm. Let us seek out some desolate shade,
and there

Weep our sad bosoms empty.

Macduff. Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword ; and like good men,
Bestride our *downfal birth-doom* : each new morn,
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out
Like syllables of dolour.

He who can discover what is meant by him that earnestly exhorts him to *bestride* his *downfal birth-doom*, is at liberty to adhere to the present text ; but those who are willing to confess that such counsel would to them be unintelligible, must endeavour to discover some reading less obscure. It is probable that Shakespeare wrote,

— Like good men,
Bestride our *downfalg birthdom*—

The allusion is to a man from whom something valuable is about to be taken by violence, and who, that he may defend it without encumbrance, lays it on the ground, and stands over it with his weapon

in his hand. Our birthdom, or birthright, says he, lies on the ground, let us, like men who are to fight for what is dearest to them, not abandon it, but stand over it and defend it. This is a strong picture of obstinate resolution.

Birthdom for *birthright* is formed by the same analogy with *masterdom* in this play, signifying the *privileges* or *rights* of a *master*.

Perhaps it might be *birth-dame* for *mother*; let us stand over our mother that lies bleeding on the ground.

NOTE XL.

Malcolm. Now we'll together, and the *chance of goodness*

Be like our warranted quarrel.

The *chance of goodness*, as it is commonly read, conveys no sense. If there be not some more important error in the passage, it should at least be pointed thus :

— And the chance, of goodness,
Be like our warranted quarrel.

That is, May the event be, of the goodness of heaven [*pro justitia divina*] answerable to the cause.

But I am inclined to believe that Shakespeare wrote,

— And the chance, O goodness,
Be like our warranted quarrel.

This some of his transcribers wrote with a small *o*, which another imagined to mean *of*. If we adopt

this reading, the sense will be, *and O thou sovereign goodness, to whom we now appeal, may our fortune answer to our cause.*

NOTE XLI.

ACT V. SCENE III.

Macbeth. BRING me no more reports, let them fly all,
 'Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,
 I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Mal-
 colm?

Was he not born of woman?—

— Fly false Thanes,
 And mingle with the English epicures.

In the first line of this speech, the proper pauses are not observed in the present editions.

Bring me no more reports—let them fly all—
Tell me not any more of desertions—Let all my subjects leave me—I am safe till, &c.

The reproach of epicurism, on which Mr. Theobald has bestowed a note, is nothing more than a natural invective uttered by an inhabitant of a barren country, against those who have more opportunities of luxury.

NOTE XLII.

Macbeth. I HAVE liv'd long enough: my *way* of life
 Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf.

As there is no relation between the *way of life*, and *fallen into the sear*; I am inclined to think, that the *W* is only an *M* inverted, and that it was originally written, *My May* of life.

I am now passed from the spring to the autumn of my days, but I am without those comforts that should succeed the sprightliness of bloom, and support me in this melancholy season.

NOTE XLIII.

SCENE IV.

Malcolm. 'Tis his main hope :
 For where there is *advantage to be given*,
 Both more or less have given him the revolt;
 And none serve with him but constrained things,
 Whose hearts are absent too.

The impropriety of the expression *advantage to be given*, instead of *advantage given*, and the disagreeable repetition of the word *given* in the next line, incline me to read,

—*Where there is a vantage to be gone*,
 Both more and less have given him the revolt.

Advantage or *vantage* in the time of Shakespeare signified opportunity.

More and less is the same with *greater and less*. So in the interpolated *Mandeville*, a book of that age, there is a chapter of *India the more and the less*.

NOTE XLIV.

SCENE V.

Macbeth. —— WHEREFORE was that cry ?

Seyton. The queen is dead.

Macbeth. She should (1) have died hereafter ;
 There would have been a time for such a *word*.
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of (2) recorded time ;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
 Life 's but a walking shadow.——

(1) She should have died hereafter,
 There would have been a time for such a *word*.

This passage has very justly been suspected of being corrupt. It is not apparent for what *word* there would have been a *time* ; and that there would or would not be a *time* for any *word*, seems not a consideration of importance sufficient to transport Macbeth into the following exclamation. I read therefore,

She should have died hereafter,
 There would have been a time for—such a *world* !
 To-morrow, &c.

It is a broken speech, in which only part of the thought is expressed, and may be paraphrased thus :

The queen is dead. Macbeth. Her death should have been deferred to some more peaceful hour; had she lived longer, there would at length have been a time for the honours due to her as a queen, and that respect which I owe her for her fidelity and love. Such is the world—such is the condition of human life, that we always think to-morrow will be happier than to-day; but to-morrow and to-morrow steals over us unenjoyed and unregarded, and we still linger in the same expectation to the moment appointed for our end. All these days, which have thus passed away, have sent multitudes of fools to the grave, who were engrossed by the same dream of future felicity, and, when life was departing from them, were like me reckoning on to-morrow.

(2) To the last syllable of recorded time.

Recorded time seems to signify the time fixed in the decrees of heaven for the period of life. The *record of futurity* is indeed no accurate expression, but as we only know transactions past or present, the language of men affords no term for the volumes of prescience, in which future events may be supposed to be written.

NOTE XLV.

*Macbeth. If thou speak'st false,
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive
Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth,
I care not if thou dost for me as much—
I pull in resolution, and begin
To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend,*

That lies like truth. “ Fear not till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane,” and now a wood
Comes toward Dunsinane.

I pull in resolution ——

Though this is the reading of all the editions, yet as it is a phrase without either example, elegance, or propriety, it is surely better to read

I pall in resolution ——

I languish in my constancy, my confidence begins to forsake me. It is scarcely necessary to observe how easily *pall* might be changed into *pull* by a negligent writer, or mistaken for it by an unskilful printer.

NOTE XLVI.

SCENE VIII.

Seyward. HAD I as many sons as I have hairs,
I would not wish them to a fairer death :
And so his knell is knoll'd.

This incident is thus related from Henry of Huntingdon by Camden in his Remains, from which our author probably copied it.

When Seyward, the martial Earl of Northumberland, understood that his son, whom he had sent in service against the Scotchmen, was slain, he de-

manded whether his wound were in the fore part or hinder part of his body. When it was answered in the fore part, he replied, "I am right glad; neither wish I any other death to me or mine."

AFTER the foregoing pages were printed, the late edition of Shakespeare, ascribed to Sir Thomas Hanmer, fell into my hands; and it was therefore convenient for me to delay the publication of my remarks, till I had examined whether they were not anticipated by similar observations, or precluded by better. I therefore read over this tragedy, but found that the editor's apprehension is of a cast so different from mine, that he appears to find no difficulty in most of those passages which I have represented as unintelligible, and has therefore passed smoothly over them, without any attempt to alter or explain them.

Some of the lines with which I had been perplexed, have been indeed so fortunate as to attract his regard; and it is not without all the satisfaction which it is usual to express on such occasions, that I find an entire agreement between us in substituting [see Note II.] *quarrel* for *quarry*, and in explaining the adage of the cat, [Note XVII.] But this pleasure is, like most others, known only to be regretted; for I have the unhappiness to find no such conformity with regard to any other passage.

The line which I have endeavoured to amend,

Note XI. is likewise attempted by the new editor, and is perhaps the only passage in the play in which he has not submissively admitted the emendations of foregoing critics. Instead of the common reading,

— Doing every thing
Safe towards your love and honour,

he has published,

— Doing every thing
Shap'd towards your love and honour.

This alteration, which, like all the rest attempted by him, the reader is expected to admit, without any reason alleged in its defence, is, in my opinion, more plausible than that of Mr. Theobald; whether it is right, I am not to determine.

In the passage which I have altered in Note XL. an emendation is likewise attempted in the late edition, where, for

— And the chance *of* goodness
 Be like our warranted quarrel,

is substituted—And the chance *in* goodness—whether with more or less elegance, dignity, and propriety, than the reading which I have offered, I must again decline the province of deciding.

Most of the other emendations which he has endeavoured, whether with good or bad fortune, are too trivial to deserve mention. For surely the weapons of criticism ought not to be blunted again st

an editor, who can imagine that he is restoring poetry, while he is amusing himself with alterations like these ;

For —— *This is the serjeant,*
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought;

—— This is the sergeant, who
Like a *right* good and hardy soldier fought.

For —— Dismay'd not this
Our captains Macbeth and Banquo?—Yes;

—— Dismay'd not this
Our captains brave Macbeth and Banquo?—Yes.

Such harmless industry may, surely, be forgiven, if it cannot be praised : may he therefore never want a monosyllable, who can use it with such wonderful dexterity.

Rumpatur quisquis rumpitur invidia !

The rest of this edition I have not read; but, from the little that I have seen, think it not dangerous to declare that, in my opinion, its pomp recommends it more than its accuracy. There is no distinction made between the ancient reading, and the innovations of the editor ; there is no reason given for any of the alterations which are made ; the emendations of former critics are adopted without any acknowledgment, and few of the difficulties are removed which have hitherto embarrassed the readers of Shakespeare.

I would not, however, be thought to insult the editor, nor to censure him with too much petulance, for having failed in little things, of whom I have been told, that he excels in greater. But I may, without indecency, observe, that no man should attempt to teach others what he has never learned himself; and that those who, like Themistocles, have studied the arts of policy, and *can teach a small state how to grow great*, should, like him, disdain to labour in trifles, and consider petty accomplishments as below their ambition.

THE
A D V E N T U R E R.

No. 34. SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 1753.

Has toties optata exegit gloria pœnas.

Juv.

Such fate pursues the votaries of praise.

TO THE ADVENTURER.

SIR,

Fleet-prison, Feb. 24.

To a benevolent disposition, every state of life will afford some opportunities of contributing to the welfare of mankind. Opulence and splendor are enabled to dispel the cloud of adversity, to dry up the tears of the widow and the orphan, and to increase the felicity of all around them: their example will animate virtue, and retard the progress of vice. And even indigence and obscurity, though without power to confer happiness, may at least prevent misery, and apprise those who are blinded by their passions that they are on the brink of irremediable calamity.

Pleased, therefore, with the thought of recovering others from that folly which has embittered my own days, I have presumed to address the Adventurer from the dreary mansions of wretchedness and despair, of which the gates are so wonderfully constructed, as to fly open for the reception of strangers, though they are impervious as a rock of adamant to such as are within them :

— *Facilis descensus Averni ;*
Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis :
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus hic labor est. VIRG.

The gates of hell are open night and day ;
 Smooth the descent, and easy is the way :
 But to return and view the cheerful skies ;
 In this the task and mighty labour lies. DRYDEN.

Suffer me to acquaint you, Sir, that I have glittered at the ball, and sparkled in the circle ; that I have had the happiness to be the unknown favourite of an unknown lady at the masquerade, have been the delight of tables of the first fashion, and the envy of my brother beaux ; and to descend a little lower, it is, I believe, still remembered, that Messrs. Velours and d'Espagne stand indebted for a great part of their present influence at Guildhall, to the elegance of my shape, and the graceful freedom of my carriage.

— *Sed quæ præclara et prospera tanti,*
Ut rebus lætis par sit mensura malorum ! JUV.

See the wild purchase of the bold and vain,
 Where every bliss is bought with equal pain !

As I entered into the world very young, with an elegant person and a large estate, it was not long before I disentangled myself from the shackles of religion ; for I was determined to the pursuit of pleasure, which according to my notions consisted in the unrestrained and unlimited gratifications of every passion and every appetite ; and as this could not be obtained under the frowns of a perpetual dictator, I considered religion as my enemy ; and proceeding to treat her with contempt and derision, was nota little delighted, that the unfashionableness of her appearance, and the unanimated uniformity of her motions, afforded frequent opportunities for the sallies of my imagination.

Conceiving now that I was sufficiently qualified to laugh away scruples, I imparted my remarks to those among my female favourites, whose virtue I intended to attack ; for I was well assured, that pride would be able to make but a weak defence, when religion was subverted ; nor was my success below my expectation : the love of pleasure is too strongly implanted in the female breast, to suffer them scrupulously to examine the validity of arguments designed to weaken restraint ; all are easily led to believe, that whatever thwarts their inclination must be wrong : little more, therefore, was required, than by the addition of some circumstances, and the exaggeration of others, to make merriment supply the place of demonstration ; nor was I so senseless as to offer arguments to such as could not attend to them, and with whom a repartee or catch would more effectually answer the same purpose. This being effected, there remained only “ the

dread of the world :" but Roxana soared too high, to think the opinion of others worthy her notice ; Lætitia seemed to think of it only to declare, that " if all her hairs were worlds," she should reckon them " well lost for love ;" and Pastorella fondly conceived, that she could dwell for ever by the side of a bubbling fountain, content with her swain and fleecy care ; without considering that stillness and solitude can afford satisfaction only to innocence.

It is not the desire of new acquisitions, but the glory of conquests, that fires the soldier's breast ; as indeed the town is seldom worth much, when it has suffered the devastations of a siege ; so that though I did not openly declare the effects of my own prowess, which is forbidden by the laws of honour, it cannot be supposed that I was very solicitous to bury my reputation, or to hinder accidental discoveries. To have gained one victory, is an inducement to hazard a second engagement : and though the success of the general should be a reason for increasing the strength of the fortification, it becomes, with many, a pretence for an immediate surrender, under the notion that no power is able to withstand so formidable an adversary ; while others brave the danger, and think it mean to surrender, and dastardly to fly. Melissa, indeed, knew better ; and though she could not boast the apathy, steadiness, and inflexibility of a Cato, wanted not the more prudent virtue of Scipio, and gained the victory by declining the contest.

You must not, however, imagine, that I was, during this state of abandoned libertinism, so fully

convinced of the fitness of my own conduct, as to be free from uneasiness. I knew very well, that I might justly be deemed the pest of society, and that such proceedings must terminate in the destruction of my health and fortune ; but to admit thoughts of this kind was to live upon the rack : I fled, therefore, to the regions of mirth and jollity, as they are called, and endeavoured with burgundy, and a continual rotation of company, to free myself from the pangs of reflection. From these orgies we frequently sallied forth in quest of adventures, to the no small terror and consternation of all the sober stragglers that came in our way : and though we never injured, like our illustrious progenitors, the Mohocks, either life or limbs ; yet we have in the midst of Covent Garden buried a tailor, who had been troublesome to some of our fine gentlemen, beneath a heap of cabbage-leaves and stalks, with this conceit,

Satia te cavle quem semper cupisti.

Glut yourself with cabbage, of which you have always been greedy.

There can be no reason for mentioning the common exploits of breaking windows and bruising the watch ; unless it be to tell you of the device of producing before the justice broken lanterns, which have been paid for an hundred times : or their appearances with patches on their heads, under pretence of being cut by the sword that was never drawn : nor need I say any thing of the more formidable attack of sturdy chairmen, armed with poles ; by a slight stroke of which, the pride of

Ned Revel's face was at once laid flat, and that effected in an instant, which its most mortal foe had for years assayed in vain. I shall pass over the accidents that attended attempts to scale windows, and endeavours to dislodge signs from their hooks : there are many “ hair-breadth 'scapes,” besides those in the “ imminent deadly breach ;” but the rake's life, though it be equally hazardous with that of the soldier, is neither accompanied with present honour nor with pleasing retrospect ; such is, and such ought to be the difference, between the enemy and the preserver of his country.

Amidst such giddy and thoughtless extravagance, it will not seem strange, that I was often the dupe of coarse flattery. When Mons. L'Al-longe assured me, that I thrust quart over arm better than any man in England, what could I less than present him with a sword that cost me thirty pieces? I was bound for a hundred pounds for Tom Trippet, because he had declared that he would dance a minuet with any man in the three kingdoms except myself. But I often parted with money against my inclination, either because I wanted the resolution to refuse, or dreaded the appellation of a niggardly fellow ; and I may be truly said to have squandered my estate, without honour, without friends, and without pleasure. The last may, perhaps, appear strange to men unacquainted with the masquerade of life : I deceived others, and I endeavoured to deceive myself ; and have worn the face of pleasantry and gaiety, while my heart suffered the most exquisite torture.

By the instigation and encouragement of my

friends, I became at length ambitious of a seat in parliament ; and accordingly set out for the town of Wallop in the west, where my arrival was welcomed by a thousand throats, and I was in three days sure of a majority : but after drinking out one hundred and fifty hogsheads of wine, and bribing two-thirds of the corporation twice over, I had the mortification to find, that the borough had been before sold to Mr. Courtly.

In a life of this kind, my fortune, though considerable, was presently dissipated ; and as the attraction grows more strong the nearer any body approaches the earth, when once a man begins to sink into poverty, he falls with velocity always increasing ; every supply is purchased at a higher and higher price, and every office of kindness obtained with greater and greater difficulty. Having now acquainted you with my state of elevation, I shall, if you encourage the continuance of my correspondence, show you by what steps I descended from a first floor in Pall-Mall to my present habitation.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

MYSARGYRUS.

No. 41. TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 1753.

— *Si mutabile pectus
Est tibi, consiliis, non curribus, utere nostris
Dum potes, et solidis etiamnum sedibus adstas ;
Dumque male optatos nondum premis inscius axes.* OVID.

— Th' attempt forsake,
And not my chariot but my counsel take ;
While yet securely on the earth you stand ;
Nor touch the horses with too rash a hand. ADDISON.

TO THE ADVENTURER.

SIR,

Fleet, March 24.

I NOW send you the sequel of my story ; which had not been so long delayed, if I could have brought myself to imagine, that any real impatience was felt for the fate of Mysargyrus ; who has travelled no unbeaten track to misery, and consequently can present the reader only with such incidents as occur in daily life.

You have seen me, Sir, in the zenith of my glory ; not dispensing the kindly warmth of an all-cheering sun, but, like another Phaeton, scorching and blasting every thing round me. I shall proceed, therefore, to finish my career, and pass as rapidly as possible through the remaining vicissitudes of my life.

When I first began to be in want of money, I made no doubt of an immediate supply. The news-

papers were perpetually offering directions to men, who seemed to have no other business than to gather heaps of gold for those who place their supreme felicity in scattering it. I posted away, therefore, to one of these advertisers, who by his proposals seemed to deal in thousands ; and was not a little chagrined to find, that this general benefactor would have nothing to do with any larger sum than thirty pounds, nor would venture that without a joint note from myself and a reputable housekeeper, or for a longer time than three months.

It was not yet so bad with me, as that I needed to solicit surety for thirty pounds : yet partly from the greediness that extravagance always produces, and partly from a desire of seeing the humour of a petty usurer, a character of which I had hitherto lived in ignorance, I condescended to listen to his terms. He proceeded to inform me of my great felicity in not falling into the hands of an extortioner ; and assured me, that I should find him extremely moderate in his demands : he was not, indeed, certain, that he could furnish me with the whole sum, for people were at this particular time extremely pressing and importunate for money ; yet as I had the appearance of a gentleman, he would try what he could do, and give me his answer in three days.

At the expiration of the time, I called upon him again ; and was again informed of the great demand for money, and that “money was money now :” he then advised me to be punctual in my payment, as that might induce him to befriend me hereafter ; and delivered me the money, deducting at the rate

of five and thirty per cent. with another panegyrick upon his own moderation.

I will not tire you with the various practices of usurious oppression ; but cannot omit my transaction with Squeeze on Tower-hill, who finding me a young man of considerable expectations, employed an agent to persuade me to borrow five hundred pounds, to be refunded by an annual payment of twenty per cent. during the joint lives of his daughter Nancy Squeeze and myself. The negotiator came prepared to inforce his proposal with all his art ; but finding that I caught his offer with the eagerness of necessity, he grew cold and languid : “ he had mentioned it out of kindness ; he would try to serve me : Mr. Squeeze was an honest man, but extremely cautious.” In three days he came to tell me, that his endeavours had been ineffectual, Mr. Squeeze having no good opinion of my life : but that there was one expedient remaining ; Mrs. Squeeze could influence her husband, and her good-will might be gained by a compliment. I waited that afternoon on Mrs. Squeeze, and poured out before her the flatteries which usually gain access to rank and beauty : I did not then know, that there are places in which the only compliment is a bribe. Having yet credit with a jeweller, I afterwards procured a ring of thirty guineas, which I humbly presented, and was soon admitted to a treaty with Mr. Squeeze. He appeared peevish and backward, and my old friend whispered me, that he would never make a dry bargain : I, therefore, invited him to a tavern. Nine times we met on the affair ; nine times I paid four pounds for the supper and claret ;

and nine guineas I gave the agent for good offices. I then obtained the money, paying ten per cent. advance; and at the tenth meeting gave another supper, and disbursed fifteen pounds for the writings.

Others, who styled themselves brokers, would only trust their money upon goods: that I might, therefore, try every art of expensive folly, I took a house and furnished it. I amused myself with despoiling my moveables of their glossy appearance, for fear of alarming the lender with suspicions; and in this I succeeded so well, that he favoured me with one hundred and sixty pounds upon that which was rated at seven hundred. I then found that I was to maintain a guardian about me, to prevent the goods from being broken or removed. This was, indeed, an unexpected tax; but it was too late to recede; and I comforted myself, that I might prevent a creditor, of whom I had some apprehensions, from seizing, by having a prior execution always in the house.

By such means I had so embarrassed myself, that my whole attention was engaged in contriving excuses, and raising small sums to quiet such as words would no longer mollify. It cost me eighty pounds in presents to Mr. Leech the attorney, for his forbearance of one hundred, which he solicited me to take when I had no need. I was perpetually harassed with importunate demands, and insulted by wretches, who a few months before would not have dared to raise their eyes from the dust before me. I lived in continual terror, frightened by every noise at the door, and terrified at the approach of every step quicker than common. I never retired

to rest, without feeling the justness of the Spanish proverb, “ Let him who sleeps too much, borrow the pillow of a debtor;” my solicitude and vexation kept me long waking; and when I had closed my eyes, I was pursued or insulted by visionary bailiffs.

When I reflected upon the meanness of the shifts I had reduced myself to, I could not but curse the folly and extravagance that had overwhelmed me in a sea of troubles, from which it was highly improbable that I should ever emerge. I had some time lived in hopes of an estate, at the death of my uncle; but he disappointed me by marrying his housekeeper; and, catching an opportunity soon after of quarrelling with me, for settling twenty pounds a year upon a girl whom I had seduced, told me that he would take care to prevent his fortune from being squandered upon prostitutes.

Nothing now remained, but the chance of extricating myself by marriage; a scheme which, I flattered myself, nothing but my present distress would have made me think on with patience. I determined, therefore, to look out for a tender novice, with a large fortune at her own disposal; and accordingly fixed my eyes upon Miss Biddy Simper. I had now paid her six or seven visits; and so fully convinced her of my being a gentleman and a rake, that I made no doubt that both her person and fortune would be soon mine.

At this critical time, Miss Gripe called upon me, in a chariot bought with my money, and loaded with trinkets that I had in my days of affluence lavished on her. Those days were now over; and there was little hope that they would ever return. She was not able to withstand the temptation of ten

pounds that Talon the bailiff offered her, but brought him into my apartment disguised in a livery; and taking my sword to the window, under pretence of admiring the workmanship, beckoned him to seize me.

Delay would have been expensive without use, as the debt was too considerable for payment or bail: I, therefore, suffered myself to be immediately conducted to jail.

*Vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci,
Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia curæ:
Pallentesque habitant morbi, tristisque senectus,
Et metus, et malesuada famæ, et turpis egestas.* VINC.
Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell,
Revengeful cares and sullen sorrows dwell;
And pale diseases, and repining age;
Want, fear, and famine's unresisted rage. DRYDEN.

Confinement of any kind is dreadful; a prison is sometimes able to shock those, who endure it in a good cause: let your imagination, therefore, acquaint you, with what I have not words to express, and conceive, if possible, the horrors of imprisonment attended with reproach and ignominy, of involuntary association with the refuse of mankind, with wretches who were before too abandoned for society, but being now freed from shame or fear, are hourly improving their vices by consorting with each other.

There are, however, a few, whom like myself imprisonment has rather mortified than hardened: with these only I converse; and of these you may perhaps hereafter receive some account from

Your humble seryant,

MYSARGYRUS.

No. 45. TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 1753.

Nulla fides regni sociis, omnisque potestas

Impatiens consortis erit.

LUCAN.

No faith of partnership dominion owns ;
Still discord hovers o'er divided thrones.

IT is well known, that many things appear plausible in speculation, which can never be reduced to practice ; and that of the numberless projects that have flattered mankind with theoretical speciousness, few have served any other purpose than to show the ingenuity of their contrivers. A voyage to the moon, however romantick and absurd the scheme may now appear, since the properties of air have been better understood, seemed highly probable to many of the aspiring wits in the last century, who began to dote upon their glossy plumes, and fluttered with impatience for the hour of their departure :

— *Percant vestigia mille*
Ante fugam, absentemque serit gravis unguia campum.

Hills, vales, and floods appear already crost ;
And, ere he starts, a thousand steps are lost. POPE.

Among the fallacies which only experience can detect, there are some, of which scarcely experience itself can destroy the influence ; some which, by a captivating show of indubitable certainty, are perpetually gaining upon the human mind ; and which, though every trial ends in disappointment, obtain new credit as the sense of miscarriage wears gra-

dually away, persuade us to try again what we have tried already, and expose us by the same failure to double vexation.

Of this tempting, this delusive kind, is the expectation of great performances by confederated strength. The speculatist, when he has carefully observed how much may be performed by a single band, calculates by a very easy operation the force of thousands, and goes on accumulating power till resistance vanishes before it; then rejoices in the success of his new scheme, and wonders at the folly or idleness of former ages, who have lived in want of what might so readily be procured, and suffered themselves to be debarred from happiness by obstacles which one united effort would have so easily surmounted.

But this gigantick phantom of collective power vanishes at once into air and emptiness, at the first attempt to put it into action. The different apprehensions, the discordant passions, the jarring interests of men, will scarcely permit that many should unite in one undertaking.

Of a great and complicated design, some will never be brought to discern the end; and of the several means by which it may be accomplished, the choice will be a perpetual subject of debate, as every man is swayed in his determination by his own knowledge or convenience. In a long series of action, some will languish with fatigue, and some be drawn off by present gratifications; some will loiter because others labour, and some will cease to labour because others loiter: and if once they come within prospect of success and profit, some will be greedy and others envious; some will undertake

more than they can perform, to enlarge their claims of advantage; some will perform less than they undertake, lest their labours should chiefly turn to the benefit of others.

The history of mankind informs us that a single power is very seldom broken by a confederacy. States of different interests, and aspects malevolent to each other, may be united for a time by common distress; and in the ardour of self-preservation fall unanimously upon an enemy, by whom they are all equally endangered. But if their first attack can be withstood, time will never fail to dissolve their union: success and miscarriage will be equally destructive: after the conquest of a province, they will quarrel in the division; after the loss of a battle, all will be endeavouring to secure themselves by abandoning the rest.

From the impossibility of confining numbers to the constant and uniform prosecution of a common interest, arises the difficulty of securing subjects against the encroachment of governors. Power is always gradually stealing away from the many to the few, because the few are more vigilant and consistent; it still contracts to a smaller number, till in time it centres in a single person.

Thus all the forms of government instituted among mankind, perpetually tend towards monarchy; and power, however diffused through the whole community, is by negligence or corruption, commotion or distress, reposed at last in the chief magistrate.

“ There never appear,” says Swift, “ more than five or six men of genius in an age; but if they were united, the world could not stand before

them." It is happy, therefore, for mankind, that of this union there is no probability. As men take in a wider compass of intellectual survey, they are more likely to choose different objects of pursuit; as they see more ways to the same end, they will be less easily persuaded to travel together; as each is better qualified to form an independent scheme of private greatness, he will reject with greater obstinacy the project of another; as each is more able to distinguish himself as the head of a party, he will less readily be made a follower or an associate.

The reigning philosophy informs us, that the vast bodies which constitute the universe, are regulated in their progress through the etherial spaces, by the perpetual agency of contrary forces; by one of which they are restrained from deserting their orbits, and losing themselves in the immensity of heaven; and held off by the other from rushing together, and clustering round their centre with everlasting cohesion.

The same contrariety of impulse may be perhaps discovered in the motions of men: we are formed for society, not for combination; we are equally unqualified to live in a close connexion with our fellow-beings, and in total separation from them; we are attracted towards each other by general sympathy, but kept back from contact by private interests.

Some philosophers have been foolish enough to imagine, that improvements might be made in the system of the universe, by a different arrangement of the orbs of heaven; and politicians, equally ignorant and equally presumptuous, may easily be led to suppose, that the happiness of our world would be

promoted by a different tendency of the human mind. It appears, indeed, to a slight and superficial observer, that many things impracticable in our present state, might be easily effected, if mankind were better disposed to union and co-operation: but a little reflection will discover, that if confederacies were easily formed, they would lose their efficacy, since numbers would be opposed to numbers, and unanimity to unanimity; and instead of the present petty competitions of individuals or single families, multitudes would be supplanting multitudes, and thousands plotting against thousands.

There is no class of the human species of which the union seems to have been more expected, than of the learned: the rest of the world have almost always agreed to shut scholars up together in colleges and cloisters; surely not without hope, that they would look for that happiness in concord, which they were debarred from finding in variety; and that such conjunctions of intellect would recompense the munificence of founders and patrons, by performances above the reach of any single mind.

But discord, who found means to roll her apple into the banqueting chamber of the goddesses, has had the address to scatter her laurels in the seminaries of learning. The friendship of students and of beauties is for the most part equally sincere, and equally durable: as both depend for happiness on the regard of others, on that of which the value arises merely from comparison, they are both exposed to perpetual jealousies, and both incessantly employed in schemes to intercept the praises of each other.

I am, however, far from intending to inculcate,

that this confinement of the studious to studious companions, has been wholly without advantage to the publick : neighbourhood, where it does not conciliate friendship, incites competition ; and he that would contentedly rest in a lower degree of excellence, where he had no rival to dread, will be urged by his impatience of inferiority to incessant endeavours after great attainments.

These stimulations of honest rivalry are, perhaps, the chief effects of academies and societies ; for whatever be the bulk of their joint labours, every single piece is always the production of an individual, that owes nothing to his colleagues but the contagion of diligence, a resolution to write, because the rest are writing, and the scorn of obscurity while the rest are illustrious.

No. 50. SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1753.

*Quicunque turpi fraude semel innotuit,
Etiamsi vera dici, amittit fidem.*

PHÆD.

The wretch that often has deceiv'd,
Though truth he speaks, is ne'er believ'd.

WHEN Aristotle was once asked, what a man could gain by uttering falsehoods ; he replied, “ Not to be credited when he shall tell the truth.”

The character of a liar is at once so hateful and contemptible, that even of those who have lost their virtue it might be expected, that from the violation of truth they should be restrained by their pride. Almost every other vice that disgraces human nature, may be kept in countenance by applause and association : the corrupter of virgin innocence sees himself envied by the men, and at least not detested by the women : the drunkard may easily unite with beings, devoted like himself to noisy merriments or silent insensibility, who will celebrate his victories over the novices of intemperance, boast themselves the companions of his prowess, and tell with rapture of the multitudes whom unsuccessful emulation has hurried to the grave : even the robber and the cut-throat have their followers, who admire their address and intrepidity, their stratagems of rapine, and their fidelity to the gang.

The liar, and only the liar, is invariably and universally despised, abandoned, and disowned : he has

no domestick consolations, which he can oppose to the censure of mankind ; he can retire to no fraternity, where his crimes may stand in the place of virtues ; but is given up to the hisses of the multitude, without friend and without apologist. It is the peculiar condition of falsehood, to be equally detested by the good and bad : " The devils," says Sir Thomas Brown, " do not tell lies to one another ; for truth is necessary to all societies : nor can the society of hell subsist without it."

It is natural to expect, that a crime thus generally detested should be generally avoided ; at least, that none should expose himself to unabated and unpitied infamy, without an adequate temptation ; and that to guilt so easily detected, and so severely punished, an adequate temptation would not readily be found.

Yet so it is, that in defiance of censure and contempt, truth is frequently violated ; and scarcely the most vigilant and unremitting circumspection will secure him that mixes with mankind, from being hourly deceived by men of whom it can scarcely be imagined, that they mean any injury to him or profit to themselves ; even where the subject of conversation could not have been expected to put the passions in motion, or to have excited either hope or fear, or zeal or malignity, sufficient to induce any man to put his reputation in hazard, however little he might value it, or to overpower the love of truth, however weak might be its influence.

The casuists have very diligently distinguished lies into their several classes, according to their various degrees of malignity : but they have, I think,

generally omitted that which is most common, and, perhaps, not least mischievous ; which, since the moralists have not given it a name, I shall distinguish as the lie of vanity.

To vanity may justly be imputed most of the falsehoods, which every man perceives hourly playing upon his ear, and, perhaps, most of those that are propagated with success. To the lie of commerce, and the lie of malice, the motive is so apparent, that they are seldom negligently or implicitly received : suspicion is always watchful over the practices of interest ; and whatever the hope of gain, or desire of mischief, can prompt one man to assert, another is by reasons equally cogent incited to refute. But vanity pleases herself with such slight gratifications, and looks forward to pleasure so remotely consequential, that her practices raise no alarm, and her stratagems are not easily discovered.

Vanity is, indeed, often suffered to pass unpursued by suspicion, because he that would watch her motions, can never be at rest : fraud and malice are bounded in their influence ; some opportunity of time and place is necessary to their agency ; but scarce any man is abstracted one moment from his vanity ; and he, to whom truth affords no gratifications, is generally inclined to seek them in falsehoods.

It is remarked by Sir Kenelm Digby, “that every man has a desire to appear superior to others, though it were only in having seen what they have not seen.” Such an accidental advantage, since it neither implies merit, nor confers dignity, one would think should not be desired so much as to be

counterfeited : yet even this vanity, trifling as it is, produces innumerable narratives, all equally false ; but more or less credible in proportion to the skill or confidence of the relater. How many may a man of diffusive conversation count among his acquaintances, whose lives have been signalized by numberless escapes ; who never cross the river but in a storm, or take a journey into the country without more adventures than beset the knights-errant of ancient times in pathless forests or enchanted castles ! How many must he know, to whom portents and prodigies are of daily occurrence ; and for whom nature is hourly working wonders invisible to every other eye, only to supply them with subjects of conversation !

Others there are that amuse themselves with the dissemination of falsehood, at greater hazard of detection and disgrace ; men marked out by some lucky planet for universal confidence and friendship, who have been consulted in every difficulty, entrusted with every secret, and summoned to every transaction : it is the supreme felicity of these men, to stun all companies with noisy information ; to still doubt, and overbear opposition, with certain knowledge or authentick intelligence. A liar of this kind, with a strong memory or brisk imagination, is often the oracle of an obscure club, and, till time discovers his impostures, dictates to his hearers with uncontrolled authority ; for if a publick question be started, he was present at the debate ; if a new fashion be mentioned, he was at court the first day of its appearance ; if a new performance of literature draws the attention of the publick, he has patronised

the author, and seen his work in manuscript : if a criminal of eminence be condemned to die, he often predicted his fate, and endeavoured his reformation : and who that lives at a distance from the scene of action, will dare to contradict a man, who reports from his own eyes and ears, and to whom all persons and affairs are thus intimately known ?

This kind of falsehood is generally successful for a time, because it is practised at first with timidity and caution : but the prosperity of the liar is of short duration ; the reception of one story is always an incitement to the forgery of another less probable ; and he goes on to triumph over tacit credulity, till pride or reason rises up against him, and his companions will no longer endure to see him wiser than themselves.

It is apparent, that the inventors of all these fictions intend some exaltation of themselves, and are led off by the pursuit of honour from their attendance upon truth : their narratives always imply some consequence in favour of their courage, their sagacity, or their activity, their familiarity with the learned, or their reception among the great ; they are always bribed by the present pleasure of seeing themselves superior to those that surround them, and receiving the homage of silent attention and envious admiration.

But vanity is sometimes excited to fiction by less visible gratifications : the present age abounds with a race of liars who are content with the consciousness of falsehood, and whose pride is to deceive others without any gain or glory to themselves. Of this tribe it is the supreme pleasure to remark a lady in

the playhouse or the park, and to publish, under the character of a man suddenly enamoured, an advertisement in the news of the next day, containing a minute description of her person and her dress. From this artifice, however, no other effect can be expected, than perturbations which the writer can never see, and conjectures of which he never can be informed: some mischief, however, he hopes he has done; and to have done mischief, is of some importance. He sets his invention to work again, and produces a narrative of a robbery or a murder, with all the circumstances of time and place accurately adjusted. This is a jest of greater effect and longer duration: if he fixes his scene at a proper distance, he may for several days keep a wife in terror for her husband, or a mother for her son; and please himself with reflecting, that by his abilities and address some addition is made to the miseries of life.

There is, I think, an ancient law of Scotland, by which *leasing-making* was capitally punished. I am, indeed, far from desiring to increase in this kingdom the number of executions; yet I cannot but think, that they who destroy the confidence of society, weaken the credit of intelligence, and interrupt the security of life; harass the delicate with shame, and perplex the timorous with alarms; might very properly be awakened to a sense of their crimes, by denunciations of a whipping-post or pillory: since many are so insensible of right and wrong, that they have no standard of action but the law; nor feel guilt, but as they dread punishment.

No. 53. TUESDAY, MAY 8, 1753.

Quisque suos patimur Manes.

VIRG.

Each has his lot, and bears the fate he drew.

SIR,

Fleet, May 6.

IN consequence of my engagements, I address you once more from the habitations of misery. In this place, from which business and pleasure are equally excluded, and in which our only employment and diversion is to hear the narratives of each other, I might much sooner have gathered materials for a letter, had I not hoped to have been reminded of my promise; but since I find myself placed in the regions of oblivion, where I am no less neglected by you than by the rest of mankind, I resolved no longer to wait for solicitation, but stole early this evening from between gloomy sullenness and riotous merriment, to give you an account of part of my companions.

One of the most eminent members of our club is Mr. Edward Scamper, a man of whose name the Olympick heroes would not have been ashamed. Ned was born to a small estate, which he determined to improve; and therefore, as soon as he became of age, mortgaged part of his land to buy a mare and stallion, and bred horses for the course. He was at first very successful, and gained several of the king's plates, as he is now every day boasting, at the expense of very little more than ten times their value. At last, however, he discovered, that victory brought

him more honour than profit: resolving, therefore, to be rich as well as illustrious, he replenished his pockets by another mortgage, became on a sudden a daring better, and resolving not to trust a jockey with his fortune, rode his horse himself, distanced two of his competitors the first heat, and at last won the race, by forcing his horse on a descent to full speed at the hazard of his neck. His estate was thus repaired, and some friends that had no souls advised him to give over; but Ned now knew the way to riches, and therefore without caution increased his expenses. From this hour he talked and dreamed of nothing but a horse-race; and rising soon to the summit of equestrian reputation, he was constantly expected on every course, divided all his time between lords and jockies, and, as the unexperienced regulated their bets by his example, gained a great deal of money by laying openly on one horse and secretly on the other. Ned was now so sure of growing rich, that he involved his estate in a third mortgage, borrowed money of all his friends, and risked his whole fortune upon Bay-Lincoln. He mounted with beating heart, started fair, and won the first heat; but in the second, as he was pushing against the foremost of his rivals, his girth broke, his shoulder was dislocated, and before he was dismissed by the surgeon, two bailiffs fastened upon him, and he saw Newmarket no more. His daily amusement for four years has been to blow the signal for starting, to make imaginary matches, to repeat the pedigree of Bay-Lincoln, and to form resolutions against trusting another groom with the choice of his girth.

The next in seniority is Mr. Timothy Snug, a man of deep contrivance and impenetrable secrecy. His father died with the reputation of more wealth than he possessed: Tim, therefore, entered the world with a reputed fortune of ten thousand pounds. Of this he very well knew that eight thousand was imaginary: but being a man of refined policy, and knowing how much honour is annexed to riches, he resolved never to detect his own poverty; but furnished his house with elegance, scattered his money with profusion, encouraged every scheme of costly pleasure, spoke of petty losses with negligence, and on the day before an execution entered his doors, had proclaimed at a publick table his resolution to be jolted no longer in a hackney-coach.

Another of my companions is the magnanimous Jack Scatter, the son of a country gentleman, who having no other care than to leave him rich, considered that literature could not be had without expense; masters would not teach for nothing; and when a book was bought and read, it would sell for little. Jack was, therefore, taught to read and write by the butler; and when this acquisition was made, was left to pass his days in the kitchen and the stable, where he heard no crime censured but covetousness and distrust of poor honest servants, and where all the praise was bestowed on good housekeeping, and a free heart. At the death of his father, Jack set himself to retrieve the honour of his family: he abandoned his cellar to the butler, ordered his groom to provide hay and corn at discretion, took his housekeeper's word for the expenses of the kitchen, allowed all his servants

to do their work by deputies, permitted his domesticks to keep his house open to their relations and acquaintance, and in ten years was conveyed hither, without having purchased by the loss of his patrimony either honour or pleasure, or obtained any other gratification than that of having corrupted the neighbouring villagers by luxury and idleness.

Dick Serge was a draper in Cornhill, and passed eight years in prosperous diligence, without any care but to keep his books, or any ambition but to be in time an alderman: but then, by some unaccountable revolution in his understanding, he became enamoured of wit and humour, despised the conversation of pedlars and stockjobbers, and rambled every night to the régions of gaiety, in quest of company suited to his taste. The wits at first flocked about him for sport, and afterwards for interest; some found their way into his books, and some into his pockets; the man of adventure was equipped from his shop for the pursuit of a fortune; and he had sometimes the honour to have his security accepted when his friends were in distress. Elated with these associations, he soon learned to neglect his shop; and having drawn his money out of the funds, to avoid the necessity of teasing men of honour for trifling debts, he has been forced at last to retire hither, till his friends can procure him a post at court.

Another that joins in the same mess is Bob Cornice, whose life has been spent in fitting up a house. About ten years ago Bob purchased the country habitation of a bankrupt: the mere shell of a building, Bob holds no great matter; the in-

side is the test of elegance. Of this house he was no sooner master than he summoned twenty workmen to his assistance, tore up the floors and laid them anew, stripped off the wainscot, drew the windows from their frames, altered the disposition of doors and fire-places, and cast the whole fabrick into a new form: his next care was to have his ceilings painted, his pannels gilt, and his chimney-pieces carved: every thing was executed by the ablest hands: Bob's business was to follow the workmen with a microscope, and call upon them to retouch their performances, and heighten excellence to perfection. The reputation of his house now brings round him a daily confluence of visitants, and every one tells him of some elegance which he has hitherto overlooked, some convenience not yet procured, or some new mode in ornament or furniture. Bob, who had no wish but to be admired, nor any guide but the fashion, thought every thing beautiful in proportion as it was new, and considered his work as unfinished, while any observer could suggest an addition; some alteration was therefore every day made, without any other motive than the charms of novelty. A traveller at last suggested to him the convenience of a grotto: Bob immediately ordered the mount of his garden to be excavated; and having laid out a large sum in shells and minerals, was busy in regulating the disposition of the colours and lustres, when two gentlemen, who had asked permission to see his garden, presented him a writ, and led him off to less elegant apartments.

I know not, sir, whether among this fraternity of sorrow you will think any much to be pitied;

nor indeed do many of them appear to solicit compassion, for they generally applaud their own conduct, and despise those whom want of taste or spirit suffers to grow rich. It were happy if the prisons of the kingdom were filled only with characters like these, men whom prosperity could not make useful, and whom ruin cannot make wise: but there are among us many who raise different sensations, many that owe their present misery to the seductions of treachery, the strokes of casualty, or the tenderness of pity; many whose sufferings disgrace society, and whose virtues would adorn it: of these, when familiarity shall have enabled me to recount their stories without horror, you may expect another narrative from,

Sir,

Your most humble servant,

MY SARGYRUS.

No. 58. SATURDAY, MAY 25, 1753.

Damnant quod non intelligunt. Cic.

They condemn what they do not understand.

EURIPIDES, having presented Socrates with the writings of Heraclitus, a philosopher famed for involution and obscurity, inquired afterwards his opinion of their merit. "What I understand," said Socrates, "I find to be excellent; and, therefore, believe that to be of equal value which I cannot understand."

The reflection of every man who reads this passage will suggest to him the difference between the practice of Socrates, and that of modern criticks: Socrates, who had, by long observation upon himself and others, discovered the weakness of the strongest, and the dimness of the most enlightened intellect, was afraid to decide hastily in his own favour, or to conclude that an author had written without meaning, because he could not immediately catch his ideas; he knew that the faults of books are often more justly imputable to the reader, who sometimes wants attention, and sometimes penetration; whose understanding is often obstructed by prejudice, and often dissipated by remissness; who comes sometimes to a new study, unfurnished with knowledge previously necessary; and finds difficulties insuperable, for want of ardour sufficient to encounter them.

Obscurity and clearness are relative terms: to some readers scarce any book is easy, to others not many are difficult: and surely they, whom neither any exuberant praise bestowed by others, nor any eminent conquests over stubborn problems, have entitled to exalt themselves above the common orders of mankind, might condescend to imitate the candour of Socrates; and where they find incontestible proofs of superior genius, be content to think that there is justness in the connexion which they cannot trace, and cogency in the reasoning which they cannot comprehend.

This diffidence is never more reasonable, than in the perusal of the authors of antiquity; of those whose works have been the delight of ages, and transmitted as the great inheritance of mankind from one generation to another: surely, no man can, without the utmost arrogance, imagine that he brings any superiority of understanding to the perusal of these books which have been preserved in the devastation of cities, and snatched up from the wreck of nations; which those who fled before barbarians have been careful to carry off in the hurry of migration, and of which barbarians have repented the destruction. If in books thus made venerable by the uniform attestation of successive ages, any passages shall appear unworthy of that praise which they have formerly received; let us not immediately determine, that they owed their reputation to dullness or bigotry; but suspect at least that our ancestors had some reasons for their opinions, and that our ignorance of those reasons makes us differ from them.

It often happens that an author's reputation is endangered in succeeding times, by that which raised the loudest applause among his cotemporaries: nothing is read with greater pleasure than allusions to recent facts, reigning opinions, or present controversies; but when facts are forgotten, and controversies extinguished, these favourite touches lose all their graces; and the author in his descent to posterity must be left to the mercy of chance, without any power of ascertaining the memory of those things, to which he owed his luckiest thoughts and his kindest reception.

On such occasions, every reader should remember the diffidence of Socrates, and repair by his candour the injuries of time; he should impute the seeming defects of his author to some chasm of intelligence, and suppose, that the sense which is now weak was once forcible, and the expression which is now dubious formerly determinate.

How much the mutilation of ancient history has taken away from the beauty of poetical performances, may be conjectured from the light which a lucky commentator sometimes effuses, by the recovery of an incident that had been long forgotten: thus, in the third book of Horace, Juno's denunciations against those that should presume to raise again the walls of Troy, could for many ages please only by splendid images and swelling language, of which no man discovered the use or propriety, till Le Fevre, by showing on what occasion the Ode was written, changed wonder to rational delight. Many passages yet undoubtedly remain in the same author, which an exacter knowledge of the inci-

dents of his time would clear from objections. Among these I have always numbered the following lines :

*Aurum per medios ire satellites,
Et perrumpere amat saxe, potentius
Ictu fulmineo. Concidit Auguris
Argivi domus ob lucrum
Demersa excidio. Diffidit urbium
Portas vir Macedo, et subruit cœmulos
Reges muneribus. Munera navium
Sævos illaqueant duces.*

Stronger than thunder's winged force,
All-powerful gold can spread its course,
Thro' watchful guards its passage make,
And loves thro' solid walls to break:
From gold the overwhelming woes,
That crush'd the Grecian augur rose:
Philip with gold thro' cities broke,
And rival monarchs felt his yoke;
Captains of ships to gold are slaves,
Tho' fierce as their own winds and waves. FRANCIS.

The close of this passage, by which every reader is now disappointed and offended, was probably the delight of the Roman court: it cannot be imagined, that Horace, after having given to gold the force of thunder, and told of its power to storm cities and to conquer kings, would have concluded his account of its efficacy with its influence over naval commanders, had he not alluded to some fact then current in the mouths of men, and therefore more interesting for a time than the conquests of Philip.

Of the like kind may be reckoned another stanza in the same book :

— — — *Jussa coram non sine conscientia*
Surgit marito, seu vocat institor
Seu navis Hispanæ magister
Dedecorum pretiosus emptor.

The conscious husband bids her rise,
When some rich factor courts her charms,
 Who calls the wanton to his arms,
 And, prodigal of wealth and fame,
 Profusely buys the costly shame.

FRANCIS.

He has little knowledge of Horace who imagines that the factor, or the Spanish merchant, are mentioned by chance : there was undoubtedly some popular story of an intrigue, which those names recalled to the memory of his reader.

The flame of his genius in other parts, though somewhat dimmed by time, is not totally eclipsed ; his address and judgment yet appear, though much of the spirit and vigour of his sentiment is lost : this has happened to the twentieth Ode of the first book ;

Vile potabis modicis Sabinum
Cantharis, Græcâ quod ego ipse testâ
Conditum levi ; datus in theatro
Cùm tibi plausus,
Chare Mæcenas eques. Ut paterni
Fluminis ripæ, simul et jocosa
Redderet laudes tibi Vaticani
Montis imago.

A poet's beverage humbly cheap,
 (Should great Maecenas be my guest)
 The vintage of the Sabine grape,
 But yet in sober cups shall crown the feast:
 'Twas rack'd into a Grecian cask,
 Its rougher juice to melt away;
 I seal'd it too—a pleasing task!
 With annual joy to mark the glorious day,
 When in applaudive shouts thy name
 Spread from the theatre around,
 Floating on thy own Tiber's stream,
 And Echo, playful nymph, return'd the sound.

FRANCIS.

We here easily remark the intertexture of a happy compliment with an humble invitation; but certainly are less delighted than those, to whom the mention of the applause bestowed upon Maecenas, gave occasion to recount the actions or words that produced it.

Two lines which have exercised the ingenuity of modern criticks, may, I think, be reconciled to the judgment, by an easy supposition: Horace thus addresses Agrippa:

*Scriberis Vario fortis, et hostium
 Victor, Maenii carminis alite.*

Varius, a swan of Homer's wing,
 Shall brave Agrippa's conquests sing.

That Varins shiould be called “A bird of Homeric song,” appears so harsh to modern ears, that an emendation of the text has been proposed: but surely the learning of the ancients had been long ago obliterated, had every man thought himself at liberty to corrupt the lines which he did not under-

stand. If we imagine that Varius had been by any of his cotemporaries celebrated under the appellation of Musarum Ales, the swan of the Muses, the language of Horace becomes graceful and familiar; and that such a compliment was at least possible, we know from the transformation feigned by Horace of himself.

The most elegant compliment that was paid to Addison, is of this obscure and perishable kind;

When panting Virtue her last efforts made,
You brought your Clio to the virgin's aid.

These lines must please as long as they are understood; but can be understood only by those that have observed Addison's signatures in the Spectator.

The nicety of these minute allusions I shall exemplify by another instance, which I take this occasion to mention, because, as I am told, the commentators have omitted it. Tibullus addresses Cynthia in this manner :

*Te spectem, supra mea mihi cùm venerit hora,
Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.*

Before my closing eyes, dear Cynthia stand,
Held weakly by my fainting trembling hand.

To these lines Ovid thus refers in his elegy on the death of Tibullus :

*Cynthia decedens, felicius, inquit, amata
Sum tibi; vixisti dum tuus ignis eram,
Cui Nemesis, quid, ait, tibi sunt mea damna dolori?
Me tenuit moriens deficiente manu.*

Blest was my reign, retiring Cynthia cry'd:
 Not till he left my breast, Tibullus dy'd.
 Forbear, said Nemesis, my loss to moan,
 The fainting trembling hand was mine alone.

The beauty of this passage, which consists in the appropriation made by Nemesis of the line originally directed to Cynthia, had been wholly imperceptible to succeeding ages, had chance, which has destroyed so many greater volumes, deprived us likewise of the poems of Tibullus.



No. 62. SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1753.

*O fortuna viris invida fortibus
 Quam non æqua bonis præmia diridis.* SENECA.

Capricious Fortune ever joys,
 With partial hand to deal the prize,
 To crush the brave and cheat the wise.

TO THE ADVENTURER.

Sir,

Fleet, June 6.

To the account of such of my companions as are imprisoned without being miserable, or are miserable without any claim to compassion; I promised to add the histories of those, whose virtue has made them unhappy, or whose misfortunes are at least without a crime. That this catalogue

should be very numerous, neither you nor your readers ought to expect ; “ *rari quippe boni* ;” the good “ are few.” Virtue is uncommon in all the classes of humanity ; and I suppose it will scarcely be imagined more frequent in a prison than in other places.

Yet in these gloomy regions is to be found the tenderness, the generosity, the philanthropy of Serenus, who might have lived in competence and ease, if he could have looked without emotion on the miseries of another. Serenus was one of those exalted minds, whom knowledge and sagacity could not make suspicious ; who poured out his soul in boundless intimacy, and thought community of possessions the law of friendship. The friend of Serenus was arrested for debt, and after many endeavours to soften his creditor, sent his wife to solicit that assistance which never was refused. The tears and importunity of female distress were more than was necessary to move the heart of Serenus ; he hasted immediately away, and conferring a long time with his friend, found him confident that if the present pressure was taken off, he should soon be able to re-establish his affairs. Serenus, accustomed to believe, and afraid to aggravate distress, did not attempt to detect the fallacies of hope, nor reflect that every man overwhelmed with calamity believes, that if that was removed he shall immediately be happy : he, therefore, with little hesitation, offered himself as surety.

In the first raptures of escape all was joy, gratitude, and confidence ; the friend of Serenus displayed

his prospects, and counted over the sums of which he should infallibly be master before the day of payment. Serenus in a short time began to find his danger, but could not prevail with himself to repent of beneficence; and therefore suffered himself still to be amused with projects which he durst not consider, for fear of finding them impracticable. The debtor, after he had tried every method of raising money which art or indigence could prompt, wanted either fidelity or resolution to surrender himself to prison, and left Serenus to take his place.

Serenus has often proposed to the creditor, to pay him whatever he shall appear to have lost by the flight of his friend; but however reasonable this proposal may be thought, avarice and brutality have been hitherto inexorable, and Serenus still continues to languish in prison.

In this place, however, where want makes almost every man selfish, or desperation gloomy, it is the good fortune of Serenus not to live without a friend: he passes most of his hours in the conversation of Candidus, a man whom the same virtuous ductility has with some difference of circumstances made equally unhappy. Candidus, when he was young, helpless, and ignorant, found a patron that educated, protected, and supported him: his patron being more vigilant for others than himself, left at his death an only son, destitute and friendless. Candidus was eager to repay the benefits he had received; and having maintained the youth for a few years at his own house, afterwards placed him with a merchant of eminence, and gave bonds to a great value as a security for his conduct.

The young man, removed too early from the only eye of which he dreaded the observation, and deprived of the only instruction which he heard with reverence, soon learned to consider virtue as restraint, and restraint as oppression ; and to look with a longing eye at every expense to which he could not reach, and every pleasure which he could not partake : by degrees he deviated from his first regularity, and unhappily mingling among young men busy in dissipating the gains of their fathers' industry, he forgot the precepts of Candidus, spent the evening in parties of pleasure, and the morning in expedients to support his riots. He was, however, dextrous and active in business ; and his master, being secured against any consequences of dishonesty, was very little solicitous to inspect his manners, or to inquire how he passed those hours, which were not immediately devoted to the business of his profession : when he was informed of the young man's extravagance or debauchery, " Let his bondsman look to that," said he, " I have taken care of myself."

Thus the unhappy spendthrift proceeded from folly to folly, and from vice to vice, with the connivance if not the encouragement of his master ; till in the heat of a nocturnal revel he committed such violences in the street as drew upon him a criminal prosecution. Guilty and unexperienced, he knew not what course to take ; to confess his crime to Candidus, and solicit his interposition, was little less dreadful than to stand before the frown of a court of justice. Having, therefore, passed the day with anguish in his heart and distraction in his looks,

he seized at night a very large sum of money in the compting-house, and setting out he knew not whither, was heard of no more.

The consequence of his flight was the ruin of Candalus ; ruin surely undeserved and irreproachable, and such as the laws of a just government ought either to prevent or repair : nothing is more inequitable than that one man should suffer for the crimes of another, for crimes which he neither prompted nor permitted, which he could neither foresee nor prevent. When we consider the weakness of human resolutions and the inconsistency of human conduct, it must appear absurd that one man shall engage for another, that he will not change his opinions or alter his conduct.

It is, I think, worthy of consideration, whether since no wager is binding without a possibility of loss on each side, it is not equally reasonable, that no contract should be valid without reciprocal stipulations : but in this case, and others of the same kind, what is stipulated on his side to whom the bond is given ? he takes advantage of the security, neglects his affairs, omits his duty, suffers timorous wickedness to grow daring by degrees, permits appetite to call for new gratifications, and, perhaps, secretly longs for the time in which he shall have power to seize the forfeiture : and if virtue or gratitude should prove too strong for temptation, and a young man persist in honesty, however instigated by his passions, what can secure him at last against a false accusation ? I for my part always shall suspect, that he who can by such methods secure his property, will go one step farther to increase

it : nor can I think that man safely trusted with the means of mischief, who, by his desire to have them in his hands, gives an evident proof how much less he values his neighbour's happiness than his own.

Another of our companions is Lentulus, a man whose dignity of birth was very ill supported by his fortune. As some of the first offices in the kingdom were filled by his relations, he was early invited to court, and encouraged by caresses and promises to attendance and solicitation : a constant appearance in splendid company necessarily required magnificence of dress ; and a frequent participation of fashionable amusements forced him into expense : but these measures were requisite to his success ; since every body knows, that to be lost to sight is to be lost to remembrance, and that he who desires to fill a vacancy, must be always at hand, lest some man of greater vigilance should step in before him.

By this course of life his little fortune was every day made less : but he received so many distinctions in publick, and was known to resort so familiarly to the houses of the great, that every man looked on his preferment as certain, and believed that its value would compensate for its slowness : he, therefore, found no difficulty in obtaining credit for all that his rank or his vanity made necessary : and, as ready payment was not expected, the bills were proportionably enlarged, and the value of the hazard or delay were adjusted solely by the equity of the creditor. At length death deprived Lentulus of one of his patrons, and a revolution in the ministry of another ; so that all his prospects vanished at once, and those that had before encouraged his expenses, began to

perceive that their money was in danger: there was now no other contention but who should first seize upon his person, and, by forcing immediate payment, deliver him up naked to the vengeance of the rest. In pursuance of this scheme, one of them invited him to a tavern, and procured him to be arrested at the door; but Lentulus, instead of endeavouring secretly to pacify him by payment, gave notice to the rest, and offered to divide amongst them the remnant of his fortune: they feasted six hours at his expense, to deliberate on his proposal; and at last determined, that, as he could not offer more than five shillings in the pound, it would be more prudent to keep him in prison, till he could procure from his relations the payment of his debts.

Lentulus is not the only man confined within these walls, on the same account: the like procedure, upon the like motives, is common among men whom yet the law allows to partake the use of fire and water with the compassionate and the just; who frequent the assemblies of commerce in open day, and talk with detestation and contempt of highwaymen or housebreakers: but, surely, that man must be confessedly robbed, who is compelled, by whatever means, to pay the debts which he does not owe; nor can I look with equal hatred upon him, who, at the hazard of his life, holds out his pistol and demands my purse, as on him who plunders under shelter of the law, and by detaining my son or my friend in prison, extorts from me the price of their liberty. No man can be more an enemy to society than he, by whose machinations our

virtues are turned to our disadvantage ; he is less destructive to mankind than plunders cowardice, than he that preys upon compassion.

I believe, Mr. Adventurer, you will readily confess, that though not one of these, if tried before a commercial judicature, can be wholly acquitted from imprudence or temerity ; yet that, in the eye of all who can consider virtue as distinct from wealth, the fault of two of them, at least, is outweighed by the merit ; and that of the third is so much extenuated by the circumstances of his life, as not to deserve a perpetual prison : yet must these, with multitudes equally blameless, languish in confinement, till malevolence shall relent, or the law be changed.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

MYSARGYRUS.

No. 69. TUESDAY, JULY 3, 1753.

Ferē libenter homines id quod volunt credunt. CÆSAR.

Men willingly believe what they wish to be true.

TULLY has long ago observed, that no man, however weakened by long life, is so conscious of his own decrepitude, as not to imagine that he may yet hold his station in the world for another year.

Of the truth of this remark every day furnishes new confirmation : there is no time of life, in which men for the most part seem less to expect the stroke of death, than when every other eye sees it impending ; or are more busy in providing for another year than when it is plain to all but themselves, that at another year they cannot arrive. Though every funeral that passes before their eyes evinces the deceitfulness of such expectations, since every man who is born to the grave thought himself equally certain of living at least to the next year ; the survivor still continues to flatter himself, and is never at a loss for some reason why his life should be protracted, and the voracity of death continued to be pacified with some other prey.

But this is only one of the innumerable artifices practised in the universal conspiracy of mankind against themselves : every age and every condition indulges some darling fallacy ; every man amuses

himself with projects which he knows to be improbable, and which, therefore, he resolves to pursue without daring to examine them. Whatever any man ardently desires, he very readily believes that he shall some time attain : he whose intemperance has overwhelmed him with diseases, while he languishes in the spring, expects vigour and recovery from the summer sun ; and while he melts away in the summer, transfers his hopes to the frosts of winter : he that gazes upon elegance or pleasure, which want of money hinders him from imitating or partaking, comforts himself that the time of distress will soon be at an end, and that every day brings him nearer to a state of happiness ; though he knows it has passed not only without acquisition of advantage, but perhaps without endeavours after it, in the formation of schemes that cannot be executed, and in the contemplation of prospects which cannot be approached.

Such is the general dream in which we all slumber out our time : every man thinks the day coming, in which he shall be gratified with all his wishes, in which he shall leave all those competitors behind, who are now rejoicing like himself in the expectation of victory ; the day is always coming to the servile in which they shall be powerful, to the obscure in which they shall be eminent, and to the deformed in which they shall be beautiful.

If any of my readers has looked with so little attention on the world about him, as to imagine this representation exaggerated beyond probability, let him reflect a little upon his own life ; let him consider what were his hopes and prospects ten years

ago, and what additions he then expected to be made by ten years to his happiness: those years are now elapsed; have they made good the promise that was extorted from them, have they advanced his fortune, enlarged his knowledge, or reformed his conduct, to the degree that was once expected? I am afraid, every man that recollects his hopes, must confess his disappointment; and own that day has glided unprofitably after day, and that he is still at the same distance from the point of happiness.

With what consolations can those, who have thus miscarried in their chief design, elude the memory of their ill success? with what amusements can they pacify their discontent, after the loss of so large a portion of life? they can give themselves up again to the same delusions, they can form new schemes of airy gratifications, and fix another period of felicity; they can again resolve to trust the promise which they know will be broken, they can walk in a circle with their eyes shut, and persuade themselves to think that they go forward.

Of every great and complicated event, part depends upon causes out of our power, and part must be effected by vigour and perseverance. With regard to that which is styled in common language 'the work of chance', men will always find reasons for confidence or distrust, according to their different tempers or inclinations; and he that has been long accustomed to please himself with possibilities of fortuitous happiness, will not easily or willingly be reclaimed from his mistake. But the effects of human industry and skill are more easily subjected to calculation: whatever can be com-

pleted in a year, is divisible into parts, of which each may be performed in the compass of a day; he, therefore, that has passed the day without attention to the task assigned him, may be certain that the lapse of life has brought him no nearer to his object; for whatever idleness may expect from time, its produce will be only in proportion to the diligence with which it has been used. He that floats lazily down the stream, in pursuit of something borne along by the same current, will find himself indeed move forward; but unless he lays his hand to the oar, and increases his speed by his own labour, must be always at the same distance from that which he is following.

There have happened in every age some contingencies of unexpected and undeserved success, by which those who are determined to believe whatever favours their inclinations, have been encouraged to delight themselves with future advantages; they support confidence by considerations, of which the only proper use is to chase away despair: it is equally absurd to sit down in idleness because some have been enriched without labour, as to leap a precipice because some have fallen and escaped with life, or to put to sea in a storm because some have been driven from a wreck upon the coast to which they are bound.

We are all ready to confess, that belief ought to be proportioned to evidence or probability: let any man, therefore, compare the number of those who have been thus favoured by fortune, and of those who have failed of their expectations, and he will easily determine, with what justness he has registered himself in the lucky catalogue.

But there is no need on these occasions for deep inquiries or laborious calculations ; there is a far easier method of distinguishing the hopes of folly from those of reason, of finding the difference between prospects that exist before the eyes, and those that are only painted on a fond imagination. Tom Drowsy had accustomed himself to compute the profit of a darling project, till he had no longer any doubt of its success ; it was at last matured by close consideration, all the measures were accurately adjusted, and he wanted only five hundred pounds to become master of a fortune that might be envied by a director of a trading company. Tom was generous and grateful, and was resolved to recompense this small assistance with an ample fortune : he therefore deliberated for a time, to whom amongst his friends he should declare his necessities ; not that he suspected a refusal, but because he could not suddenly determine which of them would make the best use of riches, and was, therefore, most worthy of his favour. At last his choice was settled ; and knowing that in order to borrow he must show the probability of re-payment, he prepared for a minute and copious explanation of his project. But here the golden dream was at an end : he soon discovered the impossibility of imposing upon others the notions by which he had so long imposed upon himself ; which way soever he turned his thoughts, impossibility and absurdity arose in opposition on every side ; even credulity and prejudice were at last forced to give way, and he grew ashamed of crediting himself what shame would not suffer him to communicate to another.

To this test let every man bring his imaginations, before they have been too long predominant in his mind. Whatever is true will bear to be related, whatever is rational will endure to be explained; but when we delight to brood in secret over future happiness, and silently to employ our meditations upon schemes of which we are conscious that the bare mention would expose us to derision and contempt; we should then remember, that we are cheating ourselves by voluntary delusions; and giving up to the unreal mockeries of fancy, those hours in which solid advantages might be attained by sober thought and rational assiduity.

There is, indeed, so little certainty in human affairs, that the most cautious and severe examiner may be allowed to indulge some hopes which he cannot prove to be much favoured by probability; since after his utmost endeavours to ascertain events, he must often leave the issue in the hands of chance. And so scanty is our present allowance of happiness, that in many situations life could scarcely be supported, if hope were not allowed to relieve the present hour by pleasures borrowed from futurity; and re-animate the languor of dejection to new efforts, by pointing to distant regions of felicity, which yet no resolution or perseverance shall ever reach.

But these, like all other cordials, though they may invigorate in a small quantity, intoxicate in a greater; these pleasures, like the rest, are lawful only in certain circumstances, and to certain degrees; they may be useful in a due subserviency to nobler purposes, but become dangerous and destructive when once they gain the ascendant in the heart:

to soothe the mind to tranquillity by hope, even when that hope is likely to deceive us, may be sometimes useful; but to lull our faculties in a lethargy, is poor and despicable.

Vices and errors are differently modified, according to the state of the minds to which they are incident; to indulge hope beyond the warrant of reason, is the failure alike of mean and elevated understandings; but its foundation and its effects are totally different: the man of high courage and great abilities is apt to place too much confidence in himself, and to expect from a vigorous exertion of his powers more than spirit or diligence can attain: between him and his wish, he sees obstacles indeed, but he expects to overleap or break them; his mistaken ardour hurries him forward; and though perhaps he misses his end, he nevertheless obtains some collateral good, and performs something useful to mankind and honourable to himself.

The drone of timidity presumes likewise to hope, but without ground and without consequence; the bliss with which he solaces his hours, he always expects from others, though very often he knows not from whom: he folds his arms about him, and sits in expectation of some revolution in the state that shall raise him to greatness, or some golden shower that shall load him with wealth; he dozes away the day in musing upon the morrow; and at the end of life is roused from his dream only to discover that the time of action is past, and that he can now show his wisdom only by repentance.

No. 84. SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1753.

— *Tolle periculum,
Jam vaga prosilicet frænis natura remotis.* Hor.

But take the danger and the shame away,
And vagrant nature bounds upon her prey. FRANCIS.

TO THE ADVENTURER.

SIR,

IT has been observed, I think, by Sir William Temple, and after him by almost every other writer, that England affords a greater variety of characters than the rest of the world. This is ascribed to the liberty prevailing amongst us, which gives every man the privilege of being wise or foolish his own way, and preserves him from the necessity of hypocrisy or the servility of imitation.

That the position itself is true, I am not completely satisfied. To be nearly acquainted with the people of different countries can happen to very few; and in life, as in every thing else beheld at a distance, there appears an even uniformity: the petty discriminations which diversify the natural character are not discoverable but by a close inspection; we, therefore, find them most at home, because there we have most opportunities of remarking them. Much less am I convinced, that this peculiar diversification, if it be real, is the consequence of peculiar liberty; for where is the govern-

ment to be found that superintends individuals with so much vigilance, as not to leave their private conduct without restraint? Can it enter into a reasonable mind to imagine, that men of every other nation are not equally masters of their own time or houses with ourselves, and equally at liberty to be parsimonious or profuse, frolick or sullen, abstinent or luxurious? Liberty is certainly necessary to the full play of predominant humours; but such liberty is to be found alike under the government of the many or the few, in monarchies or in commonwealths.

How readily the predominant passion snatches an interval of liberty, and how fast it expands itself when the weight of restraint is taken away, I had lately an opportunity to discover, as I took a journey into the country in a stage-coach; which, as every journey is a kind of adventure, may be very properly related to you, though I can display no such extraordinary assembly as Cervantes has collected at Don Quixote's inn.

In a stage-coach the passengers are for the most part wholly unknown to one another, and without expectation of ever meeting again when their journey is at an end; one should therefore imagine, that it was of little importance to any of them, what conjectures the rest should form concerning him. Yet so it is, that as all think themselves secure from detection, all assume that character of which they are most desirous, and on no occasion is the general ambition of superiority more apparently indulged.

On the day of our departure, in the twilight of

the morning, I ascended the vehicle with three men and two women, my fellow-travellers. It was easy to observe the affected elevation of mien with which every one entered, and the supercilious civility with which they paid their compliments to each other. When the first ceremony was despatched, we sat silent for a long time, all employed in collecting importance into our faces, and endeavouring to strike reverence and submission into our companions.

It is always observable that silence propagates itself, and that the longer talk has been suspended, the more difficult it is to find any thing to say. We began now to wish for conversation ; but no one seemed inclined to descend from his dignity, or first propose a topick of discourse. At last a corpulent gentleman, who had equipped himself for this expedition, with a scarlet surtout and a large hat with a broad lace, drew out his watch, looked on it in silence, and then held it dangling at his finger. This was, I suppose, understood by all the company as an invitation to ask the time of the day, but nobody appeared to heed his overture ; and his desire to be talking so far overcame his resentment, that he let us know of his own accord that it was past five, and that in two hours we should be at breakfast.

His condescension was thrown away ; we continued all obdurate ; the ladies held up their heads ; I amused myself with watching their behaviour ; and of the other two, one seemed to employ himself in counting the trees as we drove by them, the

other drew his hat over his eyes and counterfeited a slumber. The man of benevolence, to show that he was not depressed by our neglect, hummed a tune and beat time upon his snuff-box.

Thus universally displeased with one another, and not much delighted with ourselves, we came at last to the little inn appointed for our repast ; and all began at once to recompense themselves for the constraint of silence, by innumerable questions and orders to the people that attended us. At last, what every one had called for was got, or declared impossible to be got at that time, and we were persuaded to sit round the same table ; when the gentleman in the red surtout looked again upon his watch, told us that we had half an hour to spare, but he was sorry to see so little merriment among us ; that all fellow-travellers were for the time upon the level, and that it was always his way to make himself one of the company. "I remember," says he, "it was on just such a morning as this, that I and my Lord Mumble and the Duke of Tenterden were out upon a ramble : we called at a little house, as it might be this ; and my landlady, I warrant, you, not suspecting to whom she was talking, was so jocular and facetious, and made so many merry answers to our questions, that we were all ready to burst with laughter. At last the good woman happening to overhear me whisper the duke and call him by his title, was so surprised and confounded, that we could scarcely get a word from her ; and the duke never met me from that day to this, but he talks of the little house, and quarrels with me for terrifying the landlady."

He had scarcely time to congratulate himself on the veneration which this narrative must have procured him from the company, when one of the ladies having reached out for a plate on a distant part of the table, began to remark “ the inconveniences of travelling, and the difficulty which they who never sat at home without a great number of attendants found in performing for themselves such offices as the road required ; but that people of quality often travelled in disguise, and might be generally known from the vulgar by their condescension to poor innkeepers, and the allowance which they made for any defect in their entertainment ; that for her part, while people were civil and meant well, it was never her custom to find fault, for one was not to expect upon a journey all that one enjoyed at one’s own house.”

A general emulation seemed now to be excited. One of the men, who had hitherto said nothing, called for the last newspaper ; and having perused it a while with deep pensiveness, “ It is impossible,” says he, “ for any man to guess how to act with regard to the stocks ; last week it was the general opinion that they would fall ; and I sold out twenty thousand pounds in order to a purchase : they have now risen unexpectedly ; and I make no doubt but at my return to London I shall risk thirty thousand pounds among them again.”

A young man, who had hitherto distinguished himself only by the vivacity of his looks, and a frequent diversion of his eyes from one object to another, upon this closed his snuff-box, and told us, that “ he had a hundred times talked with the

chancellor and the judges on the subject of the stocks ; that for his part he did not pretend to be well acquainted with the principles on which they were established, but had always heard them reckoned pernicious to trade, uncertain in their produce, and unsolid in their foundation ; and that he had been advised by three judges, his most intimate friends, never to venture his money in the funds, but to put it out upon land-security, till he could light upon an estate in his own country.”.

It might be expected, that upon these glimpses of latent dignity, we should all have began to look round us with veneration ; and have behaved like the princes of romance, when the enchantment that disguises them is dissolved, and they discover the dignity of each other : yet it happened, that none of these hints made much impression on the company ; every one was apparently suspected of endeavouring to impose false appearances upon the rest ; all continued their haughtiness, in hopes to enforce their claims ; and all grew every hour more sullen, because they found their representations of themselves without effect.

Thus we travelled on four days with malevolence perpetually increasing, and without any endeavour but to outvie each other in superciliousness and neglect ; and when any two of us could separate ourselves for a moment, we vented our indignation at the sauciness of the rest.

At length the journey was at an end ; and time and chance, that strip off all disguises, have discovered that the intimate of lords and dukes is a nobleman’s butler, who has furnished a shop with the money he has saved ; the man who deals so

largely in the funds, is a clerk of a broker in 'Change-alley; the lady who so carefully concealed her quality, keeps a cook-shop behind the Exchange; and the young man, who is so happy in the friendship of the judges, engrosses and transcribes for bread in a garret of the Temple. Of one of the women only I could make no disadvantageous detection, because she had assumed no character, but accommodated herself to the scene before her, without any struggle for distinction or superiority.

I could not forbear to reflect on the folly of practising a fraud, which, as the event showed, had been already practised too often to succeed, and by the success of which no advantage could have been obtained; of assuming a character, which was to end with the day; and of claiming upon false pretences honours which must perish with the breath that paid them.

But, Mr. Adventurer, let not those who laugh at me and my companions, think this folly confined to a stage-coach. Every man in the journey of life takes the same advantage of the ignorance of his fellow-travellers, disguises himself in counterfeited merit, and hears those praises with complacency which his conscience reproaches him for accepting. Every man deceives himself, while he thinks he is deceiving others; and forgets that the time is at hand when every illusion shall cease, when fictitious excellence shall be torn away, and *all* must be shown to *all* in their real estate.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

VIATOR.

No. 85. TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1753.

Qui cupit optarem curru contingere victam,

Multa tulit fecisse puer.

Hor.

The youth, who hopes th' Olympick prize to gain,

All arts must try, and every toil sustain. FRAXEUS

IT is observed by Bacon, that "reading makes a full man, conversation a ready man, and writing an exact man."

As Bacon attained to degrees of knowledge scarcely ever reached by any other man, the directions which he gives for study have certainly a just claim to our regard; for who can teach an art with so great authority, as he that has practised it with undisputed success?

Under the protection of so great a name, I shall, therefore, venture to inculcate to my ingenuous contemporaries, the necessity of reading, the fitness of consulting other understandings than their own, and of considering the sentiments and opinions of those who, however neglected in the present age, had in their own times, and many of them a long time afterwards, such reputation for knowledge and acuteness, as will scarcely ever be attained by those that despise them.

An opinion has of late been, I know not how, propagated among us, that libraries are filled only with useless lumber; that men of parts stand in

need of no assistance ; and that to spend life in poring upon books, is only to imbibe prejudices, to obstruct and embarrass the powers of nature, to cultivate memory at the expense of judgment, and to bury reason under a chaos of indigested learning.

Such is the talk of many who think themselves wise, and of some who are thought wise by others ; of whom part probably believe their own tenets, and part may be justly suspected of endeavouring to shelter their ignorance in multitudes, and of wishing to destroy that reputation which they have no hopes to share. It will, I believe, be found invariably true, that learning was never decried by any learned man ; and what credit can be given to those, who venture to condemn that which they do not know ?

If reason has the power ascribed to it by its advocates, if so much is to be discovered by attention and meditation, it is hard to believe that so many millions, equally participating of the bounties of nature with ourselves, have been for ages upon ages meditating in vain : if the wits of the present time expect the regard of posterity, which will then inherit the reason which is now thought superior to instruction, surely they may allow themselves to be instructed by the reason of former generations. When, therefore, an author declares, that he has been able to learn nothing from the writings of his predecessors, and such a declaration has been lately made, nothing but a degree of arrogance unpardonable in the greatest human understanding, can hinder him from perceiving that he is raising prejudices against his own performance ; for with what

hopes of success can he attempt that in which greater abilities have hitherto miscarried? or with what peculiar force does he suppose himself invigorated, that difficulties hitherto invincible should give way before him?

Of those whom Providence has qualified to make any additions to human knowledge, the number is extremely small; and what can be added by each single mind, even of this superior class, is very little: the greatest part of mankind must owe all their knowledge, and all must owe far the larger part of it, to the information of others. To understand the works of celebrated authors, to comprehend their systems, and retain their reasonings, is a task more than equal to common intellects; and he is by no means to be accounted useless or idle, who has stored his mind with acquired knowledge, and can detail it occasionally to others who have less leisure or weaker abilities.

Persius has justly observed, that knowledge is nothing to him who is not known by others to possess it: to the scholar himself it is nothing with respect either to honour or advantage, for the world cannot reward those qualities which are concealed from it; with respect to others it is nothing, because it affords no help to ignorance or error.

It is with justice, therefore, that in an accomplished character, Horace unites just sentiments with the power of expressing them; and he that has once accumulated learning, is next to consider, how he shall most widely diffuse and most agreeably impart it.

A ready man is made by conversation. He that

buries himself among his manuscripts, “besprent,” as Pope expresses it, “with learned dust,” and wears out his days and nights in perpetual research and solitary meditation, is too apt to lose in his elocution what he adds to his wisdom; and when he comes into the world, to appear overloaded with his own notions, like a man armed with weapons which he cannot wield. He has no facility of inculcating his speculations, of adapting himself to the various degrees of intellect which the accidents of conversation will present; but will talk to most unintelligibly, and to all unpleasantly.

I was once present at the lectures of a profound philosopher, a man really skilled in the science which he professed, who having occasion to explain the terms *opacum* and *pellucidum*, told us, after some hesitation, that *opacum* was, as one might say, *opake*, and that *pellucidum* signified *pellucid*. Such was the dexterity with which this learned reader facilitated to his auditors the intricacies of science; and so true is it, that a man may know what he cannot teach.

Boerhaave complains, that the writers who have treated of chemistry before him are useless to the greater part of students, because they pre-suppose their readers to have such degrees of skill as are not often to be found. Into the same error are all men apt to fall, who have familiarized any subject to themselves in solitude: they discourse, as if they thought every other man had been employed in the same inquiries; and expect that short hints and obscure allusions will produce in others the same train of ideas which they excite in themselves.

Nor is this the only inconvenience which the man of study suffers from a recluse life. When he meets with an opinion that pleases him, he catches it up with eagerness; looks only after such arguments as tend to his confirmation; or spares himself the trouble of discussion, and adopts it with very little proof; indulges it long without suspicion, and in time unites it to the general body of his knowledge, and treasures it up among incontestible truths: but when he comes into the world among men who, arguing upon dissimilar principles, have been led to different conclusions, and being placed in various situations, view the same object on many sides; he finds his darling position attacked, and himself in no condition to defend it: having thought always in one train, he is in the state of a man who having fenced always with the same master, is perplexed and amazed by a new posture of his antagonist; he is entangled in unexpected difficulties, he is harassed by sudden objections, he is unprovided with solutions or replies, his surprise impedes his natural powers of reasoning, his thoughts are scattered and confounded, and he gratifies the pride of airy petulance with an easy victory.

It is difficult to imagine with what obstinacy truths which one mind perceives almost by intuition, will be rejected by another; and how many artifices must be practised, to procure admission for the most evident propositions into understandings frightened by their novelty, or hardened against them by accidental prejudice; it can scarcely be conceived, how frequently, in these extemporaneous controversies, the dull will be subtle, and the acute

absurd; how often stupidity will elude the force of argument, by involving itself in its own gloom; and mistaken ingenuity will weave artful fallacies, which reason can scarcely find means to disentangle.

In these encounters the learning of the recluse usually fails him: nothing but long habit and frequent experiments can confer the power of changing a position into various forms, presenting it in different points of view, connecting it with known and granted truths, fortifying it with intelligible arguments, and illustrating it by apt similitudes; and he, therefore, that has collected his knowledge in solitude, must learn its application by mixing with mankind.

But while the various opportunities of conversation invite us to try every mode of argument, and every art of recommending our sentiments, we are frequently betrayed to the use of such as are not in themselves strictly defensible: a man heated in talk, and eager of victory, takes advantage of the mistakes or ignorance of his adversary, lays hold of concessions to which he knows he has no right, and urges proofs likely to prevail in his opponent, though he knows himself that they have no force: thus the severity of reason is relaxed, many topicks are accumulated, but without just arrangement or distinction; we learn to satisfy ourselves with such ratiocination as silences others; and seldom recal to a close examination that discourse which has gratified our vanity with victory and applause.

Some caution, therefore, must be used lest copi-

ousness and facility be made less valuable by inaccuracy and confusion. To fix the thoughts by writing, and subject them to frequent examinations and reviews, is the best method of enabling the mind to detect its own sophisms, and keep it on guard against the fallacies which it practises on others: in conversation we naturally diffuse our thoughts, and in writing we contract them; method is the excellence of writing, and unconstraint the grace of conversation.

To read, write, and converse in due proportions, is, therefore, the business of a man of letters. For all these there is not often equal opportunity; excellence, therefore, is not often attainable; and most men fail in one or other of the ends proposed, and are full without readiness, or ready without exactness. Some deficiency must be forgiven all, because all are men; and more must be allowed to pass uncensured in the greater part of the world, because none can confer upon himself abilities, and few have the choice of situations proper for the improvement of those which nature has bestowed: it is, however, reasonable to have *perfection* in our eye; that we may always advance towards it, though we know it never can be reached.

No. 92. SATURDAY, SEPT. 22, 1753.

Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti.

HOR.

Bold be the critick, zealous to his trust,
Like the firm judge inexorably just.

TO THE ADVENTURER.

SIR,

IN the papers of criticism which you have given to the publick, I have remarked a spirit of candour and love of truth equally remote from bigotry and captiousness; a just distribution of praise amongst the ancients and the moderns; a sober deference to reputation long established, without a blind adoration of antiquity; and a willingness to favour later performances, without a light or puerile fondness for novelty.

I shall, therefore, venture to lay before you such observations as have risen to my mind in the consideration of Virgil's pastorals, without any inquiry how far my sentiments deviate from established rules or common opinions.

If we survey the ten pastorals in a general view, it will be found that Virgil can derive from them very little claim to the praise of an inventor. To search into the antiquity of this kind of poetry is not my present purpose; that it has long subsisted in the

east, the Sacred Writings sufficiently inform us; and we may conjecture, with great probability, that it was sometimes the devotion, and sometimes the entertainment of the first generations of mankind. Theocritus united elegance with simplicity; and taught his shepherds to sing with so much ease and harmony, that his countrymen despairing to excel, forbore to imitate him; and the Greeks, however vain or ambitious, left him in quiet possession of the garlands which the wood-nymphs had bestowed upon him.

Virgil, however, taking advantage of another language, ventured to copy or to rival the Sicilian bard: he has written with greater splendour of diction, and elevation of sentiment: but as the magnificence of his performances was more, the simplicity was less; and, perhaps, where he excels Theocritus, he sometimes obtains his superiority by deviating from the pastoral character, and performing what Theocritus never attempted.

Yet, though I would willingly pay to Theocritus the honour which is always due to an original author, I am far from intending to deprecate Virgil; of whom Horace justly declares, that the rural muses have appropriated to him their elegance and sweetness, and who, as he copied Theocritus in his design, has resembled him likewise in his success; for, if we except Calphurnius, an obscure author of the lower ages, I know not that a single pastoral was written after him by any poet, till the revival of literature.

But though his general merit has been univer-

sally acknowledged, I am far from thinking all the productions of his rural Thalia equally excellent : there is, indeed, in all his pastorals a strain of versification which it is vain to seek in any other poet ; but if we except the first and the tenth, they seem liable either wholly or in part to considerable objections.

The second, though we should forget the great charge against it, which I am afraid can never be refuted, might, I think, have perished, without any diminution of the praise of its author ; for I know not that it contains one affecting sentiment or pleasing description, or one passage that strikes the imagination or awakens the passions.

The third contains a contest between two shepherds, begun with a quarrel of which some particulars might well be spared, carried on with sprightliness and elegance, and terminated at last in a reconciliation : but, surely, whether the invectives with which they attack each other be true or false, they are too much degraded from the dignity of pastoral innocence ; and instead of rejoicing that they are both victorious, I should not have grieved could they have been both defeated.

The poem to Pollio is, indeed, of another kind : it is filled with images at once splendid and pleasing, and is elevated with grandeur of language worthy of the first of Roman poets ; but I am not able to reconcile myself to the disproportion, between the performance and the occasion that produced it : that the golden age should return because Pollio had a son, appears so wild a fiction,

that I am ready to suspect the poet of having written, for some other purpose, what he took this opportunity of producing to the publick.

The fifth contains a celebration of Daphnis, which has stood to all succeeding ages as the model of pastoral elegies. To deny praise to a performance which so many thousands have laboured to imitate, would be to judge with too little deference for the opinion of mankind : yet whoever shall read it with impartiality, will find that most of the images are of the mythological kind, and, therefore, easily invented ; and that there are few sentiments of rational praise or natural lamentation.

In the Silenus he again rises to the dignity of philosophick sentiments and heroick poetry. The address to Varus is eminently beautiful : but since the compliment paid to Gallus fixes the transaction to his own time, the fiction of Silenus seems injudicious ; nor has any sufficient reason yet been found, to justify his choice of those fables that make the subject of the song.

The seventh exhibits another contest of the tuneful shepherds : and, surely, it is not without some reproach to his inventive power, that of ten pastorals Virgil has written two upon the same plan. One of the shepherds now gains an acknowledged victory, but without any apparent superiority, and the reader, when he sees the prize adjudged, is not able to discover how it was deserved.

Of the eighth pastoral, so little is properly the work of Virgil, that he has no claim to other praise or blame than that of a translator.

Of the ninth, it is scarce possible to discover the design or tendency; it is said, I know not upon what authority, to have been composed from fragments of other poems; and except a few lines in which the author touches upon his own misfortunes, there is nothing that seems appropriated to any time or place, or of which any other use can be discovered than to fill up the poem.

The first and the tenth pastorals, whatever be determined of the rest, are sufficient to place their author above the reach of rivalry. The complaint of Gallus disappointed in his love, is full of such sentiments as disappointed love naturally produces; his wishes are wild, his resentment is tender, and his purposes are inconstant. In the genuine language of despair, he sooths himself awhile with the pity that shall be paid him after his death:

— *Tamen cantabilis, Arcades, inquit,
Montibus hæc vestris: soli cantare periti
Arcades. O mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant,
Vestra meos olim si fistula dicat amores!*

— Yet, O Arcadian swains,
Ye best artificers of soothing strains!
Tune your soft reeds, and teach your rocks my woes,
So shall my shade in sweeter rest repose.
O that your birth and business had been mine;
To feed the flock, and prune the spreading vine!

WARTON.

Discontented with his present condition, and desirous to be any thing but what he is, he wishes himself one of the shepherds. He then catches the idea of rural tranquillity; but soon discovers how much happier he should be in these happy regions, with Lycoris at his side:

*Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori :
 Hic nemus ; hic ipso tecum consumerer ævo.
 'Nunc insanus anior duri me Martis in armis,
 Tela inter media, atque adversos detinet hostes.
 Tu procul a patriâ (nec sit mihi credere) tantum
 Alpinas, ah dura, nives, et frigora Rheni
 Me sine sola vides ! Ah te ne frigora ladtant !
 Ah tibi ne teneras glacies secet aspera plantas !*

Here cooling fountains roll through flow'ry meads,
 Here woods, Lycoris, lift their verdant heads ;
 Here could I wear my careless life away,
 And in thy arms insensibly decay.

Instead of that, me frantick love detains
 'Mid foes, and dreadful darts, and bloody plains :
 While you—and can my soul the tale believe,
 Far from your country, lonely wand'ring leave
 Me, me your lover, barbarous fugitive !
 Seek the rough Alps where snows eternal shine,
 And joyless borders of the frozen Rhine.
 Ah ! may no cold e'er blast my dearest maid,
 Nor pointed ice thy tender feet invade !

WARTON.

He then turns his thoughts on every side, in quest of something that may solace or amuse him : he proposes happiness to himself, first in one scene and then in another ; and at last finds that nothing will satisfy :

*Jam neque Hamadryades rursum, nec carmina nobis
 Ipsa placent : ipsæ rursum concedite sylva :
 Non illum nostri possunt mutare labores ;
 Nec si frigoribus mediis Hebrumque bibamus,
 Sithoniasque nives hyenis subeamus aquosæ :
 Nec si, cum moriens altâ liber aret in ulmo,
 Æthiopum versemus oves sub sidere Cancri,
 Omnia vincit amori ; et nos cedamus amori.*

But now again no more the woodland maids,
 Nor pastoral songs delight—Farewell, ye shades—
 No toils of ours the cruel god can change,
 Though lost in frozen deserts we should range;
 Though we should drink where chilling Hebrus flows,
 Endure bleak winter blasts, and Thracian snows;
 Or on hot India's plains our flocks should feed,
 Where the parch'd elm declines his sickening head;
 Beneath fierce-glowing Cancer's fiery beams,
 Far from cool breezes and refreshing streams.
 Love over all maintains resistless sway,
 And let us Love's all-conquering power obey.

WARTON.

But notwithstanding the excellence of the tenth pastoral, I cannot forbear to give the preference to the first, which is equally natural and more diversified. The complaint of the shepherd, who saw his old companion at ease in the shade, while himself was driving his little flock he knew not whither, is such as, with variation of circumstances, misery always utters at the sight of prosperity :

*Nos patriæ fines, et dulcia linquimus arva ;
 Nos patriam fugimus : tu, Tity'e, lentus in umbrā,
 Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida sylvas.*

We leave our country's bounds, bur much-lov'd plains;
 We from our country fly, unhappy swains!
 You, Tit'rus, in the groves at leisure laid,
 Teach Amaryllis' name to every shade.

WARTON.

His account of the difficulties of his journey gives a very tender image of pastoral distress :

— *En ipse capellas*

Protenus æger ago: hanc etiam vix, Tityre, duco:
Hic inter densas corylos modo namque gemellos,
Spem gregis, ah! silice in nudâ connixa reliquit.

And lo! sad partner of the general care,
 Weary and faint I drive my goats afar!

While scarcely this my leading hand sustains,
 Tir'd with the way, and recent from her pains;
 For 'mid yon tangled hazels as we past,
 On the bare flints her hapless twin she cast,
 The hopes and promise of my ruin'd sold!

WARTON.

The description of Virgil's happiness in his little farm combines almost all the images of rural pleasure; and he, therefore, that can read it with indifference, has no sense of pastoral poetry:

Fortunata senex, ergo tua rura manebunt,
Et tibi magna satis; quamvis lapis omnia nudus,
Limosoque palus obducat pascua junco:
Non insueta graves tentabunt pabula fætus,
Nec mala vicini pecoris contagia lalent.
Fortunata senex, his inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros, frigus captabis opacum.
Hinc tibi, quæ semper vicino ab limite sepes,
Hyblæis cibis florem depasta salicti,
Sæpe levi somnum suadebit inire susurro.
Hinc altâ sub rupe canet frondator ad auras;
Nec tamen interea raucae, tua cura, palumbes,
Nec gemere aeria cessabit turtur ab ulmo.

Happy old man! then still thy farm's restor'd,
 Enough for thee, shall bless thy frugal board.
 What though rough stones the naked soil o'erspread,
 Or marshy bulrush rear its wat'ry head,

No foreign food thy teeming ewes shall fear,
 No touch contagious spread its influence here.
 Happy old man ! here 'mid th' accustom'd streams
 And sacred springs, you'll shun the scorching beams ;
 While from yon willow-fence, thy pasture's bound,
 The bees that suck their flow'ry stores around,
 Shall sweetly mingle, with the whispering boughs,
 Their lulling murmurs, and invite repose :
 While from steep rocks the pruner's song is heard :
 Nor the soft cooing dove, thy fav'rite bird,
 Mean while shall cease to breathe her melting strain,
 Nor turtles from th' aerial elm to 'plain.

WARTON.

It may be observed, that these two poems were produced by events that really happened ; and may, therefore, be of use to prove, that we can always feel more than we can imagine, and that the most artful fiction must give way to truth.

I am, sir,

Your humble servant,

DUBIUS.

No. 95. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1753.

Dulcique animos novitate tenebo.

OVID.

And with sweet novelty your soul detain.

IT is often charged upon writers, that with all their pretensions to genius and discoveries, they do little more than copy one another; and that compositions obtruded upon the world with the pomp of novelty contain only tedious repetitions of common sentiments, or at best exhibit a transposition of known images, and give a new appearance to truth only by some slight difference of dress and decoration.

The allegation of resemblance between authors is indisputably true; but the charge of plagiarism, which is raised upon it, is not to be allowed with equal readiness. A coincidence of sentiment may easily happen without any communication, since there are many occasions in which all reasonable men will nearly think alike. Writers of all ages have had the same sentiments, because they have in all ages had the same objects of speculation; the interests and passions, the virtues and vices of mankind, have been diversified in different times, only by unessential and casual varieties: and we must, therefore, expect in the works of all those who attempt to describe them, such a likeness as

we find in the pictures of the same person drawn in different periods of his life.

It is necessary, therefore, that before an author be charged with plagiarism, one of the most reproachful, though, perhaps, not the most atrocious of literary crimes, the subject on which he treats should be carefully considered. We do not wonder that historians, relating the same facts, agree in their narration; or that authors, delivering the elements of science, advance the same theorems, and lay down the same definitions: yet it is not wholly without use to mankind that books are multiplied; and that different authors lay out their labours on the same subject; for there will always be some reason why one should on particular occasions, or to particular persons; be preferable to another; some will be clear where others are obscure, some will please by their style, and others by their method, some by their embellishments, and others by their simplicity, some by closeness, and others by diffusion.

The same indulgence is to be shown to the writers of morality: right and wrong are immutable; and those, therefore, who teach us to distinguish them, if they all teach us right, must agree with one another. The relations of social life, and the duties resulting from them, must be the same at all times and in all nations: some petty differences may be, indeed, produced, by forms of government or arbitrary customs; but the general doctrine can receive no alteration.

Yet it is not to be desired that morality should be considered as interdicted to all future writers:

men will always be tempted to deviate from their duty, and will, therefore, always want a monitor to recall them; and a new book often seizes the attention of the publick, without any other claim than that it is new. There is likewise in composition, as in other things, a perpetual vicissitude of fashion; and truth is recommended at one time to regard by appearances which at another would expose it to neglect; the author, therefore, who has judgment to discern the taste of his contemporaries, and skill to gratify it, will have always an opportunity to deserve well of mankind, by conveying instruction to them in a grateful vehicle.

There are likewise many modes of composition, by which a moralist may deserve the name of an original writer: he may familiarise his system by dialogues after the manner of the ancients, or subtilize it into a series of syllogistic arguments: he may enforce his doctrine by seriousness and solemnity, or enliven it by sprightliness and gaiety; he may deliver his sentiments in naked precepts, or illustrate them by historical examples; he may detain the studious by the artful concatenation of a continued discourse, or relieve the busy by short strictures, and unconnected essays.

To excel in any of these forms of writing, will require a particular cultivation of the genius; whoever can attain to excellence, will be certain to engage a set of readers, whom no other method would have equally allure; and he that communicates truth with success, must be numbered among the first benefactors to mankind.

The same observation may be extended likewise to the passions: their influence is uniform, and their effects nearly the same in every human breast: a man loves and hates, desires and avoids, exactly like his neighbour; resentment and ambition, avarice and indolence, discover themselves by the same symptoms, in minds distant a thousand years from one another.

Nothing, therefore, can be more unjust, than to charge an author with plagiarism, merely because he assigns to every cause its natural effect; and makes his personages act, as others in like circumstances have always done. There are conceptions in which all men will agree, though each derives them from his own observation: whoever has been in love, will represent a lover impatient of every idea that interrupts his meditations on his mistress, retiring to shades and solitude, that he may muse without disturbance on his approaching happiness, or associating himself with some friend that flatters his passion, and talking away the hours of absence upon his darling subject. Whoever has been so unhappy as to have felt the miseries of long-continued hatred, will, without any assistance from ancient volumes, be able to relate how the passions are kept in perpetual agitation, by the recollection of injury and meditations of revenge; how the blood boils at the name of the enemy, and life is worn away in contrivances of mischief.

Every other passion is alike simple and limited, if it be considered only with regard to the breast which it inhabits; the anatomy of the mind, as that

of the body, must perpetually exhibit the same appearances ; and though by the continued industry of successive inquirers, new movements will be from time to time discovered, they can affect only the minuter parts, and are commonly of more curiosity than importance.

It will now be natural to inquire, by what arts are the writers of the present and future ages to attract the notice and favour of mankind. They are to observe the alterations which time is always making in the modes of life, that they may gratify every generation with a picture of themselves. Thus love is uniform, but courtship is perpetually varying: the different arts of gallantry, which beauty has inspired, would of themselves be sufficient to fill a volume ; sometimes balls and serenades, sometimes tournaments and adventures, have been employed to melt the hearts of ladies, who in another century have been sensible of scarce any other merit than that of riches, and listened only to jointures and pin-money. Thus the ambitious man has at all times been eager of wealth and power ; but these hopes have been gratified in some countries by supplicating the people, and in others by flattering the prince : honour in some states has been only the reward of military achievements, in others it has been gained by noisy turbulence and popular clamours. Avarice has worn a different form, as she actuated the usurer of Rome, and the stock-jobber of England ; and idleness itself, how little soever inclined to the trouble of invention, has been forced from time to time to change

its amusements, and contrive different methods of wearing out the day.

Here then is the fund, from which those who study mankind may fill their compositions with an inexhaustible variety of images and allusions: and he must be confessed to look with little attention upon scenes thus perpetually changing, who cannot catch some of the figures before they are made vulgar by reiterated descriptions.

It has been discovered by Sir Isaac Newton, that the distinct and primogenial colours are only seven; but every eye can witness, that from various mixtures, in various proportions, infinite diversifications of tints may be produced. In like manner, the passions of the mind, which put the world in motion, and produce all the bustle and eagerness of the busy crowds that swarm upon the earth; the passions, from whence arise all the pleasures and pains that we see and hear of, if we analyse the mind of man, are very few; but those few, agitated and combined, as external causes shall happen to operate, and modified by prevailing opinions and accidental caprices, make such frequent alterations on the surface of life, that the show, while we are busied in delineating it, vanishes from the view, and a new set of objects succeed, doomed to the same shortness of duration with the former: thus curiosity may always find employment, and the busy part of mankind will furnish the contemplative with the materials of speculation to the end of time.

The complaint, therefore, that all topicks are pre-occupied, is nothing more than the murmur of

ignorance or idleness, by which some discourage others and some themselves; the mutability of mankind will always furnish writers with new images, and the luxuriance of fancy may always embellish them with new decorations.

No. 99. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1753.

— *Magnis tamen excidit ausis.*

OVID.

But in the glorious enterprise he died.

ADDISON.

It has always been the practice of mankind to judge of actions by the event. The same attempts, conducted in the same manner, but terminated by different success, produce different judgments: they who attain their wishes, never want celebrators of their wisdom and their virtue; and they that miscarry, are quickly discovered to have been defective not only in mental but in moral qualities. The world will never be long without some good reason to hate the unhappy: their real faults are immediately detected; and if those are not sufficient to sink them into infamy, an additional weight of calumny will be superadded: he that fails in his endeavours after wealth or power, will not long retain either honesty or courage.

This species of injustice has so long prevailed in universal practice, that it seems likewise to have in-

fected speculation : so few minds are able to separate the ideas of greatness and prosperity, that even Sir William Temple has determined, “ that he who can deserve the name of a hero, must not only be virtuous but fortunate.”

By this unreasonable distribution of praise and blame, none have suffered oftener than projectors, whose rapidity of imagination and vastness of design raise such envy in their fellow-mortals, that every eye watches for their fall, and every heart exults at their distresses : yet even a projector may gain favour by success ; and the tongue that was prepared to hiss, then endeavours to excel others in loudness of applause.

When Coriolanus, in Shakespeare, deserted to Aufidius, the Volscian servants at first insulted him, even while he stood under the protection of the household gods ; but when they saw that the project took effect, and the stranger was seated at the head of the table, one of them very judiciously observes, “ that he always thought there was more in him than he could think.”

Machiavel has justly animadverted on the different notice taken by all succeeding times of the two great projectors Catiline and Cæsar. Both formed the same project, and intended to raise themselves to power, by subverting the commonwealth : they pursued their design, perhaps, with equal abilities, and with equal virtue ; but Catiline perished in the field, and Cæsar returned from Pharsalia with unlimited authority : and from that time, every monarch of the earth has thought himself honoured

by a comparison with Cæsar ; and Catiline has been never mentioned, but that his name might be applied to traitors and incendiaries.

In an age more remote, Xerxes projected the conquest of Greece, and brought down the power of Asia against it : but after the world had been filled with expectation and terror, his army was beaten, his fleet was destroyed, and Xerxes has been never mentioned without contempt.

A few years afterwards, Greece likewise had her turn of giving birth to a projector ; who invading Asia with a small army, went forward in search of adventures, and by his escape from one danger, gained only more rashness to rush into another : he stormed city after city, over-ran kingdom after kingdom, fought battles only for barren victory, and invaded nations only that he might make his way through them to new invasions : but having been fortunate in the execution of his projects, he died with the name of Alexander the Great.

These are, indeed, events of ancient times ; but human nature is always the same, and every age will afford us instances of publick censures influenced by events. The great business of the middle centuries was the holy war ; which undoubtedly was a noble project, and was for a long time prosecuted with a spirit equal to that with which it had been contrived : but the ardour of the European heroes only hurried them to destruction ; for a long time they could not gain the territories for which they fought, and, when at last gained, they could not keep them : their expeditions, therefore, have been the scoff of idleness and ignorance, their un-

derstanding and their virtue have been equally vilified, their conduct has been ridiculed, and their cause has been defamed.

When Columbus had engaged king Ferdinand in the discovery of the other hemisphere, the sailors, with whom he embarked in the expedition, had so little confidence in their commander, that after having been long at sea looking for coasts, which they expected never to find, they raised a general mutiny, and demanded to return. He found means to soothe them into a permission to continue the same course three days longer, and on the evening of the third day despaired land. Had the impatience of his crew denied him a few hours of the time requested, what had been his fate but to have come back with the infamy of a vain projector, who had betrayed the king's credulity to useless expenses, and risked his life in seeking countries that had no existence? how would those that had rejected his proposals, have triumphed in their acuteness? and when would his name have been mentioned, but with the makers of potable gold and malleable glass?

The last royal projectors with whom the world has been troubled, were Charles of Sweden and the Czar of Muscovy. Charles, if any judgment may be formed of his designs by his measures and his inquiries, had purposed first to dethrone the Czar, then to lead his army through pathless deserts into China, thence to make his way by the sword through the whole circuit of Asia, and by the conquest of Turkey to unite Sweden with his new dominions: but this mighty project was crushed at Pultowa;

and Charles has since been considered as a madman by those powers, who sent their ambassadors to solicit his friendship, and their generals “ to learn under him the art of war.”

The Czar found employment sufficient in his own dominions, and amused himself in digging canals, and building cities ; murdering his subjects with insufferable fatigues, and transplanting nations from one corner of his dominions to another, without regretting the thousands that perished on the way : but he attained his end, he made his people formidable, and is numbered by fame among the demi-gods.

I am far from intending to vindicate the sanguinary projects of heroes and conquerors, and would wish rather to diminish the reputation of their success, than the infamy of their miscarriages : for I cannot conceive, why he that has burnt cities, wasted nations, and filled the world with horror and desolation, should be more kindly regarded by mankind, than he that died in the rudiments of wickedness ; why he that accomplished mischief should be glorious, and he that only endeavoured it should be criminal. I would wish Cæsar and Catiline, Xerxes and Alexander, Charles and Peter, huddled together in obscurity or detestation.

But there is another species of projectors, to whom I would willingly conciliate mankind ; whose ends are generally laudable, and whose labours are innocent ; who are searching out new powers of nature, or contriving new works of art ; but who are yet persecuted with incessant obloquy, and whom the universal contempt with which they are treated

often debars from that success which their industry would obtain, if it were permitted to act without opposition.

They who find themselves inclined to censure new undertakings, only because they are new, should consider, that the folly of projection is very seldom the folly of a fool ; it is commonly the ebullition of a capacious mind, crowded with variety of knowledge, and heated with intensest of thought ; it proceeds often from the consciousness of uncommon powers, from the confidence of those, who having already done much, are easily persuaded that they can do more. When Rowley had completed the orrery, he attempted the perpetual motion ; when Boyle had exhausted the secrets of vulgar chemistry, he turned his thoughts to the work of transmutation.

A projector generally unites those qualities which have the fairest claim to veneration, extent of knowledge, and greatness of design : it was said of Catiline, “ *immoderata, incredibilia, nimis alta semper cupiebat.*” Projectors of all kinds agree in their intellects, though they differ in their morals ; they all fail by attempting things beyond their power, by despising vulgar attainments, and aspiring to performances, to which, perhaps, nature has not proportioned the force of man : when they fail, therefore, they fail not by idleness or timidity, but by rash adventure and fruitless diligence.

That the attempts of such men will often miscarry, we may reasonably expect ; yet from such men, and such only, are we to hope for the cultivation of those parts of nature which lie yet waste, and the invention of those arts which are yet

wanting to the felicity of life. If they are, therefore, universally discouraged, art and discovery can make no advances. Whatever is attempted without previous certainty of success, may be considered as a project, and amongst narrow minds may, therefore, expose its author to censure and contempt ; and if the liberty of laughing be once indulged, every man will laugh at what he does not understand, every project will be considered as madness, and every great or new design will be censured as a project. Men, unaccustomed to reason and researches, think every enterprise impracticable, which is extended beyond common effects, or comprises many intermediate operations. Many that presume to laugh at projectors, would consider a flight through the air in a winged chariot, and the movement of a mighty engine by the steam of water, as equally the dreams of mechanic lunacy ; and would hear, with equal negligence, of the union of the Thames and Severn by a canal, and the scheme of Albuquerque, the viceroy of the Indies, who in the rage of hostility had contrived to make Egypt a barren desert, by turning the Nile into the Red Sea.

Those who have attempted much, have seldom failed to perform more than those who never deviate from the common roads of action : many valuable preparations of chemistry are supposed to have risen from unsuccessful inquiries after the grand elixir : it is, therefore, just to encourage those who endeavour to enlarge the power of art, since they often succeed beyond expectation ; and when they fail, may sometimes benefit the world even by their miscarriages.

No. 102. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1753.

— *Quid tam dextro pede concipis, ut te
Conatus non paeniteat votique peracti?*

JUV.

What in the conduct of our life appears
So well design'd, so luckily begun,
But, when we have our wish, we wish undone.

DRYDEN.

TO THE ADVENTURER.

SIR,

I HAVE been for many years a trader in London. My beginning was narrow, and my stock small; I was, therefore, a long time browbeaten and despised by those, who having more money thought they had more merit than myself. I did not, however, suffer my resentment to instigate me to any mean arts of supplantation, nor my eagerness of riches to betray me to any indirect methods of gain: I pursued my business with incessant assiduity, supported by the hope of being one day richer than those who contemned me; and had, upon every annual review of my books, the satisfaction of finding my fortune increased beyond my expectation.

In a few years my industry and probity were fully recompensed, my wealth was really great, and my reputation for wealth still greater. I had large warehouses crowded with goods, and considerable sums in the publick funds; I was caressed upon the

Exchange by the most eminent merchants; became the oracle of the common council; was solicited to engage in all commercial undertakings; was flattered with the hopes of becoming in a short time one of the directors of a wealthy company; and, to complete my mercantile honours, enjoyed the expensive happiness of fining for sheriff.

Riches, you know, easily produce riches: when I had arrived to this degree of wealth, I had no longer any obstruction or opposition to fear; new acquisitions were hourly brought within my reach, and I continued for some years longer to heap thousands upon thousands.

At last I resolved to complete the circle of a citizen's prosperity by the purchase of an estate in the country, and to close my life in retirement. From the hour that this design entered my imagination, I found the fatigues of my employment every day more oppressive, and persuaded myself that I was no longer equal to perpetual attention, and that my health would soon be destroyed by the torment and distraction of extensive business. I could image to myself no happiness but in vacant jollity, and uninterrupted leisure; nor entertain my friends with any other topick, than the vexation and uncertainty of trade, and the happiness of rural privacy.

But notwithstanding these declarations, I could not at once reconcile myself to the thoughts of ceasing to get money; and though I was every day inquiring for a purchase, I found some reason for rejecting all that were offered me; and, indeed, had accumulated so many beauties and conveniences in my idea of the spot, where I was finally to be

happy, that, perhaps, the world might have been travelled over without discovery of a place which would not have been defective in some particular.

Thus I went on still talking of retirement, and still refusing to retire; my friends began to laugh at my delays, and I grew ashamed to trifle longer with my own inclinations; an estate was at length purchased, I transferred my stock to a prudent young man who had married my daughter, went down into the country, and commenced lord of a spacious manor.

Here for some time I found happiness equal to my expectation. I reformed the old house according to the advice of the best architects, I threw down the walls of the garden, and inclosed it with palisades, planted long avenues of trees, filled a green-house with exotick plants, dug a new canal, and threw the earth into the old moat.

The fame of these expensive improvements brought in all the country to see the show. I entertained my visitors with great liberality, led them round my gardens, showed them my apartments, laid before them plans for new decorations, and was gratified by the wonder of some and the envy of others.

I was envied; but how little can one man judge of the condition of another! The time was now coming, in which affluence and splendour could no longer make me pleased with myself. I had built till the imagination of the architect was exhausted; I had added one convenience to another, till I knew not what more to wish or to design; I had laid out my gardens, planted my park, and completed my

water-works; and what now remained to be done? what, but to look up to turrets, of which when they were once raised I had no farther use, to range over apartments where time was tarnishing the furniture, to stand by the cascade of which I scarcely now perceived the sound, and to watch the growth of woods that must give their shade to a distant generation.

In this gloomy inactivity is every day begun and ended: the happiness that I have been so long procuring is now at an end, because it has been procured; I wander from room to room till I am weary of myself; I ride out to a neighbouring hill in the centre of my estate, from whence all my lands lie in prospect round me; I see nothing that I have not seen before, and return home disappointed, though I knew that I had nothing to expect.

In my happy days of business I had been accustomed to rise early in the morning; and remember the time when I grieved that the night came so soon upon me, and obliged me for a few hours to shut out affluence and prosperity. I now seldom see the rising sun, but to "tell him," with the fallen angel, "how I hate his beams." I awake from sleep as to languor or imprisonment, and have no employment for the first hour but to consider by what art I shall rid myself of the second. I protract the breakfast as long as I can, because when it is ended I have no call for my attention, till I can with some degree of decency grow impatient for my dinner. If I could dine all my life, I should be happy; I eat not because I am hungry, but because I am idle: but, alas! the time quickly comes when I can eat no longer;

and so ill does my constitution second my inclination, that I cannot bear strong liquors : seven hours must then be endured before I shall sup ; but supper comes at last, the more welcome as it is in a short time succeeded by sleep.

Such, Mr. Adventurer, is the happiness, the hope of which seduced me from the duties and pleasures of a mercantile life. I shall be told by those who read my narrative, that there are many means of innocent amusement, and many schemes of useful employment, which I do not appear ever to have known ; and that nature and art have provided pleasures, by which, without the drudgery of settled business, the active may be engaged, the solitary soothed, and the social entertained.

These arts, sir, I have tried. When first I took possession of my estate, in conformity to the taste of my neighbours, I bought guns and nets, filled my kennel with dogs and my stable with horses ; but a little experience showed me, that these instruments of rural felicity would afford me few gratifications. I never shot but to miss the mark, and, to confess the truth, was afraid of the fire of my own gun. I could discover no music in the cry of the dogs, nor could divest myself of pity for the animal whose peaceful and inoffensive life was sacrificed to our sport. I was not, indeed, always at leisure to reflect upon her danger ; for my horse, who had been bred to the chase, did not always regard my choice either of speed or way, but leaped hedges and ditches at his own discretion, and hurried me along with the dogs, to the great diversion of my brother sportsmen. His eager-

ness of pursuit once incited him to swim a river ; and I had leisure to resolve in the water, that I would never hazard my life again for the destruction of a hare.

I then ordered books to be procured, and by the direction of the vicar had in a few weeks a closet elegantly furnished. You will, perhaps, be surprised when I shall tell you, that when once I had ranged them according to their sizes, and piled them up in regular gradations, I had received all the pleasure which they could give me. I am not able to excite in myself any curiosity after events which have been long passed, and in which I can, therefore, have no interest ; I am utterly unconcerned to know whether Tully or Demosthenes excelled in oratory, whether Hannibal lost Italy by his own negligence or the corruption of his countrymen. I have no skill in controversial learning, nor can conceive why so many volumes should have been written upon questions, which I have lived so long and so happily without understanding. I once resolved to go through the volumes relating to the office of justice of the peace, but found them so crabbed and intricate, that in less than a month I desisted in despair, and resolved to supply my deficiencies by paying a competent salary to a skilful clerk.

I am naturally inclined to hospitality, and for some time kept up a constant intercourse of visits with the neighbouring gentlemen : but though they are easily brought about me by better wine than they can find at any other house, I am not much relieved by their conversation ; they have no skill

in commerce or the stocks, and I have no knowledge of the history of families or the factions of the country ; so that when the first civilities are over, they usually talk to one another, and I am left alone in the midst of the company. Though I cannot drink myself, I am obliged to encourage the circulation of the glass ; their mirth grows more turbulent and obstreperous ; and before their merriment is at an end, I am sick with disgust, and, perhaps, reproached with my sobriety, or by some sly insinuations insulted as a cit.

Such, Mr. Adventurer, is the life to which I am condemned by a foolish endeavour to be happy by imitation ; such is the happiness to which I pleased myself with approaching, and which I considered as the chief end of my cares and my labours. I toiled year after year with cheerfulness, in expectation of the happy hour in which I might be idle ; the privilege of idleness is attained, but has not brought with it the blessing of tranquillity.

I am,

Yours, &c.

MERCATOR.

No. 107. TUESDAY, NOV. 13, 1753.

— *Sub judice lis est.*

HOR.

And of their vain disputings find no end.

FRANCIS.

It has been sometimes asked by those, who find the appearance of wisdom more easily attained by questions than solutions, how it comes to pass, that the world is divided by such difference of opinion; and why men, equally reasonable, and equally lovers of truth, do not always think in the same manner?

With regard to simple propositions, where the terms are understood, and the whole subject is comprehended at once, there is such an uniformity of sentiment among all human beings, that, for many ages, a very numerous set of notions were supposed to be innate, or necessarily co-existent with the faculty of reason: it being imagined, that universal agreement could proceed only from the invariable dictates of the universal parent.

In questions diffuse and compounded, this similarity of determination is no longer to be expected. At our first sally into the intellectual world, we all march together along one straight and open road; but as we proceed further, and wider prospects open to our view, every eye fixes upon a different scene; we divide into various paths, and, as we move forward, are still at a greater distance from

each other. As a question becomes more complicated and involved, and extends to a greater number of relations, disagreement of opinion will always be multiplied ; not because we are irrational, but because we are finite beings, furnished with different kinds of knowledge, exerting different degrees of attention, one discovering consequences which escape another, none taking in the whole concatenation of causes and effects, and most comprehending but a very small part, each comparing what he observes with a different criterion, and each referring it to a different purpose.

Where, then, is the wonder, that they who see only a small part should judge erroneously of the whole ? or that they, who see different and dissimilar parts, should judge differently from each other ?

Whatever has various respects, must have various appearances of good and evil, beauty or deformity ; thus, the gardener tears up as a weed the plant which the physician gathers as a medicine ; and “a general,” says Sir Kenelm Digby, “will look with pleasure over a plain, as a fit place on which the fate of empires might be decided in battle, which the farmer will despise as bleak and barren, neither fruitful of pasturage, nor fit for tillage.”

Two men examining the same question proceed commonly like the physician and gardener in selecting herbs, or the farmer and hero looking on the plain ; they bring minds impressed with different notions, and direct their inquiries to different ends ; they form, therefore, contrary conclusions, and each wonders at the other’s absurdity.

We have less reason to be surprised or offended when we find others differ from us in opinion, because we very often differ from ourselves. How often we alter our minds, we do not always remark ; because the change is sometimes made imperceptibly and gradually, and the last conviction effaces all memory of the former : yet every man, accustomed from time to time to take a survey of his own notions, will by a slight retrospection be able to discover that his mind has suffered many revolutions ; that the same things have in the several parts of his life been condemned and approved, pursued and shunned : and that on many occasions, even when his practice has been steady, his mind has been wavering, and he has persisted in a scheme of action, rather because he feared the censure of inconstancy, than because he was always pleased with his own choice.

Of the different faces shown by the same objects as they are viewed on opposite sides, and of the different inclinations which they must constantly raise in him that contemplates them, a more striking example cannot easily be found than two Greek epigrammatists will afford us in their accounts of human life, which I shall lay before the reader in English prose.

Posidippus, a comick poet, utters this complaint : “ Through which of the paths of life is it eligible to pass ? In publick assemblies are debates and troublesome affairs ; domestick privacies are haunted with anxieties : in the country is labour ; on the sea is terror : in a foreign land, he that has money must live in fear, he that wants it must pine in distress :

are you married? you are troubled with suspicions; are you single? you languish in solitude; children occasion toil, and a childless life is a state of destitution: the time of youth is a time of folly, and gray hairs are loaded with infirmity. This choice only, therefore, can be made, either never to receive being, or immediately to lose it."

Such and so gloomy is the prospect which Polippus has laid before us. But we are not to acquiesce too hastily in his determination against the value of existence: for Metrodorus, a philosopher of Athens, has shown, that life has pleasure as well as pains; and, having exhibited the present state of man in brighter colours, draws, with equal appearance of reason, a contrary conclusion.

" You may pass well through any of the paths of life. In public assemblies are honours and transactions of wisdom; in domestick privacy is stillness and quiet; in the country are the beauties of nature; on the sea is the hope of gain: in a foreign land, he that is rich is honoured, he that is poor may keep his poverty secret: are you married? you have a cheerful house; are you single? you are unincumbered: children are objects of affection, to be without children is to be without care: the time of youth is the time of vigour, and gray hairs are made venerable by piety. It will, therefore, never be a wise man's choice, either not to obtain existence, or to lose it; for every state of life has its felicity."

In these epigrams are included most of the questions which have engaged the speculations of the inquirers after happiness; and though they will

not much assist our determinations, they may, perhaps, equally promote our quiet, by showing that no absolute determination ever can be formed.

Whether a publick station, or private life be desirable, has always been debated. We see here both the allurements and discouragements of civil employments: on one side there is trouble, on the other honour; the management of affairs is vexatious and difficult, but it is the only duty in which wisdom can be conspicuously displayed: it must then still be left to every man to choose either ease or glory; nor can any general precept be given, since no man can be happy by the prescription of another.

Thus, what is said of children by Posidippus, " that they are occasions of fatigue," and by Metrodorus, " that they are objects of affection," is equally certain; but whether they will give most pain or pleasure, must depend on their future conduct and dispositions, on many causes over which the parent can have little influence: there is, therefore, room for all the caprices of imagination, and desire must be proportioned to the hope or fear that shall happen to predominate.

Such is the uncertainty in which we are always likely to remain with regard to questions, wherein we have most interest, and which every day affords us fresh opportunity to examine: we may examine, indeed, but we never can decide, because our faculties are unequal to the subject: we see a little, and form an opinion; we see more, and change it.

This inconstancy and unsteadiness, to which we must so often find ourselves liable, ought certainly to teach us moderation and forbearance towards

those who cannot accommodate themselves to our sentiments : if they are deceived, we have no right to attribute their mistake to obstinacy or negligence, because we likewise have been mistaken ; we may, perhaps, again change our own opinion ; and what excuse shall we be able to find for aversion and malignity conceived against him, whom we shall then find to have committed no fault, and who offended us only by refusing to follow us into error ?

It may likewise contribute to soften that resentment which pride naturally raises against opposition, if we consider, that he who differs from us, does not always contradict us ; he has one view of an object, and we have another ; each describes what he sees with equal fidelity, and each regulates his steps by his own eyes : one man, with Posidippus, looks on celibacy as a state of gloomy solitude, without a partner in joy or a comforter in sorrow ; the other considers it, with Metrodorus, as a state free from incumbrances, in which a man is at liberty to choose his own gratifications, to remove from place to place in quest of pleasure, and to think of nothing but merriment and diversion : full of these notions, one hastens to choose a wife, and the other laughs at his rashness, or pities his ignorance ; yet it is possible that each is right, but that each is right only for himself.

Life is not the object of science : we see a little, very little ; and what is beyond we only can conjecture. If we inquire of those who have gone before us, we receive small satisfaction ; some have travelled life without observation, and some willingly mislead us. The only thought, therefore, on which

we can repose with comfort, is that which presents to us the care of Providence, whose eye takes in the whole of things, and under whose direction all involuntary errors will terminate in happiness.

No. 108. SATURDAY, NOV. 17, 1753.

Nobis, cum simul occidit brevis lux,

Nor est perpetua una dormienda

CATERIN.

When once the short-liv'd mortal dies,

A night eternal seals his eyes.

ADDISON.

IT may have been observed by every reader, that there are certain topicks which never are exhausted. Of some images and sentiments the mind of man may be said to be enamoured; it meets them, however often they occur, with the same ardour which a lover feels at the sight of his mistress, and parts from them with the same regret when they can no longer be enjoyed.

Of this kind are many descriptions which the poets have transcribed from each other, and their successors will probably copy to the end of time; which will continue to engage, or, as the French term it, to flatter the imagination, as long as human nature shall remain the same.

When a poet mentions the spring, we know that the zephyrs are about to whisper, that the groves are to recover their verdure, the linnets to warble forth their notes of love, and the flocks and herds

to frisk over vales painted with flowers : yet, who is there so insensible of the beauties of nature, so little delighted with the renovation of the world, as not to feel his heart bound at the mention of the spring ?

When night overshadows a romantick scene, all is stillness, silence, and quiet ; the poets of the grove cease their melody, the moon towers over the world in gentle majesty, men forget their labours and their cares, and every passion and pursuit is for a while suspended. All this we know already, yet we hear it repeated without weariness ; because such is generally the life of man, that he is pleased to think on the time when he shall pause from a sense of his condition.

When a poetical grove invites us to its covert, we know that we shall find what we have already seen, a limpid brook murmuring over pebbles, a bank diversified with flowers, a green arch that excludes the sun, and a natural grot shaded with myrtles ; yet who can forbear to enter the pleasing gloom, to enjoy coolness and privacy, and gratify himself once more by scenes with which nature has formed him to be delighted ?

Many moral sentiments likewise are so adapted to our state, that we find approbation whenever they solicit it, and are seldom read without exciting a gentle emotion in the mind : such is the comparison of the life of man with the duration of a flower, a thought which, perhaps, every nation has heard warbled in its own language, from the inspired poets of the Hebrews to our own times : yet this comparison must always please, because every heart feels

its justness, and every hour confirms it by example.

Such, likewise, is the precept that directs us to use the present hour, and refer nothing to a distant time, which we are uncertain whether we shall reach : this every moralist may venture to inculcate, because it will always be approved, and because it is always forgotten.

This rule is, indeed, every day enforced, by arguments more powerful than the dissertations of moralists : we see men pleasing themselves with future happiness, fixing a certain hour for the completion of their wishes, and perishing some at a greater and some at a less distance from the happy time ; all complaining of their disappointments, and lamenting that they had suffered the years which Heaven allowed them, to pass without improvement, and deferred the principal purpose of their lives to the time when life itself was to forsake them.

It is not only uncertain, whether, through all the casualties and dangers which beset the life of man, we shall be able to reach the time appointed for happiness or wisdom ; but it is likely, that whatever now hinders us from doing that which our reason and conscience declare necessary to be done, will equally obstruct us in times to come. It is easy for the imagination, operating on things not yet existing, to please itself with scenes of unmixed felicity, or plan out courses of uniform virtue : but good and evil are in real life inseparably united ; habits grow stronger by indulgence ; and reason loses her dignity, in proportion as she has oftener yielded to temptation : “ he that cannot live well

to-day," says Martial, " will be less qualified to live well to-morrow."

Of the uncertainty of every human good, every human being seems to be convinced ; yet this uncertainty is voluntarily increased by unnecessary delay, whether we respect external causes, or consider the nature of our own minds. He that now feels a desire to do right, and wishes to regulate his life according to his reason, is not sure that, at any future time assignable, he shall be able to rekindle the same ardour ; he that has now an opportunity offered him of breaking loose from vice and folly, cannot know, but that he shall hereafter be more entangled, and struggle for freedom without obtaining it.

We are so unwilling to believe any thing to our own disadvantage, that we will always imagine the perspicacity of our judgment and the strength of our resolution more likely to increase than to grow less by time ; and, therefore, conclude, that the will to pursue laudable purposes, will be always seconded by the power.

But however we may be deceived in calculating the strength of our faculties, we cannot doubt the uncertainty of that life in which they must be employed : we see every day the unexpected death of our friends and our enemies, we see new graves hourly opened for men older and younger than ourselves, for the cautious and the careless, the dissolute and the temperate, for men who like us were providing to enjoy or improve hours now irreversibly cut off ; we see all this, and yet, instead of living, let year glide after year in preparations to live.

Men are so frequently cut off in the midst of their

projections, that sudden death causes little emotion in them that behold it, unless it be impressed upon the attention by uncommon circumstances. I, like every other man, have outlived multitudes, have seen ambition sink in its triumphs, and beauty perish in its bloom ; but have been seldom so much affected as by the fate of Euryalus, whom I lately lost as I began to love him.

Euryalus had for some time flourished in a lucrative profession ; but having suffered his imagination to be fired by an unextinguishable curiosity, he grew weary of the same dull round of life, resolved to harass himself no longer with the drudgery of getting money, but to quit his business and his profit, and enjoy for a few years the pleasures of travel. His friends heard him proclaim his resolution without suspecting that he intended to pursue it ; but he was constant to his purpose, and with great expedition closed his accounts and sold his moveables, passed a few days in bidding farewell to his companions, and with all the eagerness of romantick chivalry crossed the sea in search of happiness. Whatever place was renowned in ancient or modern history, whatever region art or nature had distinguished, he determined to visit : full of design and hope he landed on the continent ; his friends expected accounts from him of the new scenes that opened in his progress, but were informed in a few days that Euryalus was dead.

Such was the end of Euryalus. He is entered that state, whence none ever shall return ; and can now only benefit his friends, by remaining in their memories a permanent and efficacious instance of

the blindness of desire, and the uncertainty of all terrestrial good. But, perhaps, every man has like me lost an Euryalus, has known a friend die with happiness in his grasp ; and yet every man continues to think himself secure of life, and defers to some future time of leisure what he knows it will be fatal to have finally omitted.

It is, indeed, with this as with other frailties inherent in our nature ; the desire of deferring to another time, what cannot be done without endurance of some pain, or forbearance of some pleasure, will, perhaps, never be totally overcome or suppressed ; there will always be something that we shall wish to have finished, and be nevertheless unwilling to begin : but against this unwillingness it is our duty to struggle, and every conquest over our passions will make way for an easier conquest ; custom is equally forcible to bad and good ; nature will always be at variance with reason, but will rebel more feebly as she is oftener subdued.

The common neglect of the present hour is more shameful and criminal, as no man is betrayed to it by error, but admits it by negligence. Of the instability of life, the weakest understanding never thinks wrong, though the strongest often omits to think justly : reason and experience are always ready to inform us of our real state ; but we refuse to listen to their suggestions, because we feel our hearts unwilling to obey them : but, surely, nothing is more unworthy of a reasonable being, than to shut his eyes, when he sees the road which he is commanded to travel, that he may deviate with fewer reproaches from himself ; nor could any motive to tenderness,

except the consciousness that we have all been guilty of the same fault, dispose us to pity those who thus consign themselves to voluntary ruin.

No. 111. TUESDAY, NOV. 27, 1753.

— *Quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voca*

OVID.

The deeds of long-descended ancestors
Are but by grace of imputation ours.

DRYDEN.

THE evils inseparably annexed to the present condition of man are so numerous and afflictive, that it has been, from age to age, the task of some to bewail, and of others to solace them; and he, therefore, will be in danger of seeing a common enemy, who shall attempt to depreciate the few pleasures and felicities which nature has allowed us.

Yet I will confess, that I have sometimes employed my thoughts in examining the pretensions that are made to happiness, by the splendid and envied condition of life; and have not thought the hour unprofitably spent, when I have detected the imposture of counterfeit advantages, and found disquiet lurking under false appearances of gaiety and greatness.

It is asserted by a tragick poet, that “ *est miser*

nemo nisi comparatus,” “ no man is miserable, but as he is compared with others happier than himself:” this position is not strictly and philosophically true. He might have said, with rigorous propriety, that no man is happy but as he is compared with the miserable ; for such is the state of this world, that we find in it absolute misery, but happiness only comparative ; we may incur as much pain as we can possibly endure, though we can never obtain as much happiness as we might possibly enjoy.

Yet it is certain likewise, that many of our miseries are merely comparative : we are often made unhappy, not by the presence of any real evil, but by the absence of some fictitious good ; of something which is not required by any real want of nature, which has not in itself any power of gratification, and which neither reason nor fancy would have prompted us to wish, did we not see it in the possession of others.

For a mind diseased with vain longings after unattainable advantages no medicine can be prescribed, but an impartial inquiry into the real worth of that which is so ardently desired. It is well known, how much the mind, as well as the eye, is deceived by distance ; and, perhaps, it will be found, that of many imagined blessings it may be doubted, whether he that wants or possesses them has more reason to be satisfied with his lot.

The dignity of high birth and long extraction, no man, to whom nature has denied it, can confer upon himself ; and, therefore, it deserves to be considered, whether the want of that which can never

be gained, may not easily be endured. It is true, that if we consider the triumph and delight with which most of those recount their ancestors who have ancestors to recount, and the artifices by which some who have risen to unexpected fortune endeavour to insert themselves into an honourable stem, we shall be inclined to fancy that wisdom or virtue may be had by inheritance, or that all the excellencies of a line of progenitors are accumulated on their descendant. Reason, indeed, will soon inform us, that our estimation of birth is arbitrary and capricious, and that dead ancestors can have no influence but upon imagination: let it then be examined, whether one dream may not operate in the place of another; whether he that owes nothing to forefathers, may not receive equal pleasure from the consciousness of owing all to himself; whether he may not, with a little meditation, find it more honourable to found than to continue a family, and to gain dignity than transmit it; whether, if he receives no dignity from the virtues of his family, he does not likewise escape the danger of being disgraced by their crimes; and whether he that brings a new name into the world, has not the convenience of playing the game of life without a stake, and opportunity of winning much though he has nothing to lose.

There is another opinion concerning happiness, which approaches much more nearly to universality, but which may, perhaps, with equal reason be disputed. The pretensions to ancestral honours many of the sons of earth easily see to be ill-grounded; but all agree to celebrate the advantage of here-

ditary riches, and to consider those as the minions of fortune, who are wealthy from their cradles, whose estate is “ *res non parta labore sed relicta;* ” “ the acquisition of another, not of themselves; ” and whom a father’s industry has dispensed from a laborious attention to arts or commerce, and left at liberty to dispose of life as fancy shall direct them.

If every man were wise and virtuous, capable to discern the best use of time, and resolute to practise it ; it might be granted, I think, without hesitation, that total liberty would be a blessing ; and that it would be desirable to be left at large to the exercise of religious and social duties, without the interruption of importunate avocations.

But since felicity is relative, and that which is the means of happiness to one man may be to another the cause of misery, we are to consider, what state is best adapted to human nature in its present degeneracy and frailty. And, surely, to far the greater number it is highly expedient, that they should by some settled scale of duties be rescued from the tyranny of caprice, that they should be driven on by necessity through the paths of life with their attention confined to a stated task, that they may be less at leisure to deviate into mischief at the call of folly.

When we observe the lives of those whom an ample inheritance has let loose to their own direction, what do we discover that can excite our envy ? Their time seems not to pass with much applause from others, or satisfaction to themselves : many squander their exuberance of fortune in luxury and debauchery, and have no other use of money than to

inflame their passions, and riot in a wide range of licentiousness; others, less criminal indeed, but, surely, not much to be praised, lie down to sleep, and rise up to trifle, are employed every morning in finding expedients to rid themselves of the day, chase pleasure through all the places of publick resort, fly from London to Bath, and from Bath to London, without any other reason for changing place, but that they go in quest of company as idle and as vagrant as themselves; always endeavouring to raise some new desire, that they may have something to pursue, to rekindle some hope which they know will be disappointed, changing one amusement for another which a few months will make equally insipid, or sinking into languor and disease for want of something to actuate their bodies or exhilarate their minds.

Whoever has frequented those places, where idlers assemble to escape from solitude, knows that this is generally the state of the wealthy; and from this state it is no great hardship to be debarred. No man can be happy in total idleness: he that should be condemned to lie torpid and motionless, "would fly for recreation," says South, "to the mines and the galleys;" and it is well, when nature or fortune find employment for those, who would not have known how to procure it for themselves.

He, whose mind is engaged by the acquisition or improvement of a fortune, not only escapes the insipidity of indifference, and the tediousness of inactivity, but gains enjoyments wholly unknown to those, who live lazily on the toil of others; for life affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting

difficulties, passing from one step of success to another, forming new wishes, and seeing them gratified. He that labours in any great or laudable undertaking, has his fatigues first supported by hope, and afterwards rewarded by joy; he is always moving to a certain end, and when he has attained it, an end more distant invites him to a new pursuit.

It does not, indeed, always happen that diligence is fortunate; the wisest schemes are broken by unexpected accidents; the most constant perseverance sometimes toils through life without a recompense; but labour, though unsuccessful, is more eligible than idleness; he that prosecutes a lawful purpose by lawful means, acts always with the approbation of his own reason; he is animated through the course of his endeavours by an expectation which, though not certain, he knows to be just; and is at last comforted in his disappointment by the consciousness that he has not failed by his own fault?

That kind of life is most happy which affords us most opportunities of gaining our own esteem; and what can any man infer in his own favour from a condition to which, however prosperous, he contributed nothing, and which the vilest and weakest of the species would have obtained by the same right, had he happened to be the son of the same father?

To strive with difficulties, and to conquer them, is the highest human felicity; the next, is to strive, and deserve to conquer: but he whose life has passed without a contest, and who can boast neither success nor merit, can survey himself only as a useless filler of existence; and if he is content with his own character, must owe his satisfaction to insensibility.

Thus it appears that the satirist advised rightly, when he directed us to resign ourselves to the hands of Heaven, and to leave to superior powers the determination of our lot :

*Permitte ipsis expendere Numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque fit utile nostris :
Carior est illis homo quam sibi.* -

Intrust thy fortune to the pow'rs above :
Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want.
In goodness as in greatness they excel :
Ah ! that we lov'd ourselves but half so well.

DRYDEN.

What state of life admits most happiness, is uncertain ; but that uncertainty ought to repress the petulance of comparison, and silence the murmurs of discontent.

NO. 115. TUESDAY, DEC. 11, 1753.

Scribimus indocti doctique.

HOB.

All dare to write, who can or cannot read.

THEY who have attentively considered the history of mankind, know that every age has its peculiar character. At one time, no desire is felt but for military honours; every summer affords battles and sieges, and the world is filled with ravage, bloodshed, and devastation: this sanguinary fury at length subsides, and nations are divided into factions, by controversies about points that will never be decided. Men then grow weary of debate and altercation, and apply themselves to the arts of profit; trading companies are formed, manufactures improved, and navigation extended; and nothing is any longer thought on, but the increase and preservation of property, the artifices of getting money, and the pleasures of spending it.

The present age, if we consider chiefly the state of our own country, may be styled with great propriety *The age of Authors*; for, perhaps, there never was a time in which men of all degrees of ability, of every kind of education, of every profession and employment, were posting with ardour so general to the press. The province of writing was formerly left to

those, who by study, or appearance of study, were supposed to have gained knowledge unattainable by the busy part of mankind; but in these enlightened days every man is qualified to instruct every other man: and he that beats the anvil, or guides the plough, not content with supplying corporal necessities, amuses himself in the hours of leisure with providing intellectual pleasures for his countrymen.

It may be observed, that of this, as of other evils, complaints have been made by every generation: but though it may, perhaps, be true, that at all times more have been willing than have been able to write, yet there is no reason for believing that the dogmatical legions of the present race were ever equalled in number by any former period; for so widely is spread the itch of literary praise, that almost every man is an author, either in act or in purpose; has either bestowed his favours on the publick, or withholds them, that they may be more seasonably offered, or made more worthy of acceptance.

In former times, the pen, like the sword, was considered as consigned by nature to the hands of men; the ladies contented themselves with private virtues and domestick excellence; and a female writer, like a female warrior, was considered as a kind of eccentric being, that deviated, however illustriously, from her due sphere of motion, and was, therefore, rather to be gazed at with wonder, than countenanced by imitation. But as the times past are said to have been a nation of Amazons, who

drew the bow and wielded the battle-axe, formed encampments and wasted nations ; the revolution of years has now produced a generation of Amazons of the pen, who with the spirit of their predecessors have set masculine tyranny at defiance, asserted their claim to the regions of science, and seem resolved to contest the usurpations of virility.

Some, indeed, there are of both sexes, who are authors only in desire, but have not yet attained the power of executing their intentions ; whose performances have not arrived at bulk sufficient to form a volume, or who have not the confidence, however impatient of nameless obscurity, to solicit openly the assistance of the printer. Among these are the innumerable correspondents of public papers, who are always offering assistance which no man will receive, and suggesting hints that are never taken, and who complain loudly of the perverseness and arrogance of authors, lament their insensibility of their own interest, and fill the coffee-houses with dark stories of performances by eminent hands, which have been offered and rejected.

To what cause this universal eagerness of writing can be properly ascribed, I have not yet been able to discover. It is said, that every art is propagated in proportion to the rewards conferred upon it ; a position from which a stranger would naturally infer, that literature was now blessed with patronage far transcending the candour or munificence of the Augustine age, that the road to greatness was open to none but authors, and that by writing alone riches and honour were to be obtained.

But since it is true, that writers, like other competitors, are very little disposed to favour one another, it is not to be expected, that at a time, when every man writes, any man will patronize; and accordingly, there is not one that I can recollect at present who professes the least regard for the votaries of science, invites the addresses of learned men, or seems to hope for reputation from any pen but his own.

The cause, therefore, of this epidemical conspiracy for the destruction of paper, must remain a secret: nor can I discover, whether we owe it to the influences of the constellations, or the intemperature of seasons: whether the long continuance of the wind at any single point, or intoxicating vapours exhaled from the earth, have turned our nobles and our peasants, our soldiers and traders, our men and women, all into wits, philosophers, and writers.

It is, indeed, of more importance to search out the cure than the cause of this intellectual malady; and he would deserve well of his country, who, instead of amusing himself with conjectural speculations, should find means of persuading the peer to inspect his steward's accounts, or repair the rural mansion of his ancestors, who could replace the tradesman behind his counter, and send back the farmer to the mattock and the flail.

General irregularities are known in time to remedy themselves. By the constitution of ancient Egypt, the priesthood was continually increasing, till at length there was no people beside them-

selves: the establishment was then dissolved, and the number of priests was reduced and limited. Thus among us, writers will, perhaps, be multiplied, till no readers will be found, and then the ambition of writing must necessarily cease.

But as it will be long before the cure is thus gradually effected, and the evil should be stopped, if it be possible, before it rises to so great a height, I could wish that both sexes would fix their thoughts upon some salutary considerations, which might repress their ardour for that reputation which not one of many thousands is fated to obtain.

Let it be deeply impressed and frequently recollected, that he who has not obtained the proper qualifications of an author, can have no excuse for the arrogance of writing, but the power of imparting to mankind something necessary to be known. A man uneducated or unlettered may sometimes start an useful thought, or make a lucky discovery, or obtain by chance some secret of nature, or some intelligence of facts, of which the most enlightened mind may be ignorant, and which it is better to reveal, though by a rude and unskilful communication, than to lose for ever by suppressing it.

But few will be justified by this plea; for of the innumerable books and pamphlets that have overflowed the nation, scarce one has made any addition to real knowledge, or contained more than a transposition of common sentiments and a repetition of common phrases.

It will be naturally inquired, when the man who feels an inclination to write, may venture to suppose

himself properly qualified ; and, since every man is inclined to think well of his own intellect, by what test he may try his abilities, without hazarding the contempt or resentment of the publick:

The first qualification of a writer, is a perfect knowledge of the subject which he undertakes to treat ; since we cannot teach what we do not know, nor can properly undertake to instruct others while we are ourselves in want of instruction. The next requisite is, that he be master of the language in which he delivers his sentiments ; if he treats of science and demonstration, that he has attained a style clear, pure, nervous, and expressive ; if his topicks be probable and persuasory, that he be able to recommend them by the superaddition of elegance and imagery, to display the colours of varied diction, and pour forth the musick of modulated periods.

If it be again inquired, upon what principles any man shall conclude that he wants these powers, it may be readily answered, that no end is attained but by the proper means ; he only can rationally presume that he understands a subject, who has read and compared the writers that have hitherto discussed it, familiarized their arguments to himself by long meditation, consulted the foundations of different systems, and separated truth from error by a rigorous examination.

In like manner, he only has a right to suppose that he can express his thoughts, whatever they are, with perspicuity or elegance, who has carefully perused the best authors, accurately noted their diversities of style, diligently selected the best modes

of diction, and familiarized them by long habits of attentive practice.

No man is a rhetorician or philosopher by chance. He who knows that he undertakes to write on questions which he has never studied, may without hesitation determine, that he is about to waste his own time and that of his reader, and expose himself to the derision of those whom he aspires to instruct: he that without forming his style by the study of the best models, hastens to obtrude his compositions on the publick, may be certain, that whatever hope or flattery may suggest, he shall shock the learned ear with barbarisms, and contribute, wherever his work shall be received, to the depravation of taste and the corruption of language.

No. 119. TUESDAY, DEC. 25, 1753.

*Latius regnes, avidum domando
Spiritum, quam si Libyam remotis
Gadibus jungas, et umerque Pænus
Servias uni.*

HOR.

By virtue's precepts to control
The thirsty cravings of the soul,
Is over wider realms to reign
Unenvied monarch, than if Spain
You could to distant Libya join,
And both the Carthages were thine.

FRANCIS.

WHEN Socrates was asked, "which of mortal men was to be accounted nearest to the gods in happiness?" he answered, "that man, who is in want of the fewest things."

In this answer, Socrates left it to be guessed by his auditors, whether, by the exemption from want which was to constitute happiness, he meant amplitude of possessions or contraction of desire. And, indeed, there is so little difference between them, that Alexander the Great confessed the inhabitant of a tub the next man to the master of the world; and left a declaration to future ages, that if he was not Alexander, he should wish to be Diogenes.

These two states, however, though they resemble each other in their consequence, differ widely with respect to the facility with which they may be attained. To make great acquisitions can happen to

very few ; and in the uncertainty of human affairs, to many it will be incident to labour without reward, and to lose what they already possess by endeavours to make it more : some will always want abilities, and others opportunities to accumulate wealth. It is therefore happy, that nature has allowed us a more certain and easy road to plenty ; every man may grow rich by contracting his wishes, and by quiet acquiescence in what has been given him supply the absence of more.

Yet so far is almost every man from emulating the happiness of the gods, by any other means than grasping at their power, that it seems to be the great business of life [to create] wants as fast as they are satisfied. It has been long observed by moralists, that every man squanders or loses a great part of that life, of which every man knows and deplores the shortness : and it may be remarked with equal justness, that though every man laments his own insufficiency to his happiness, and knows himself a necessitous and precarious being, incessantly soliciting the assistance of others, and feeling wants which his own art or strength cannot supply ; yet there is no man, who does not, by the superaddition of unnatural cares, render himself still more dependent ; who does not create an artificial poverty, and suffer himself to feel pain for the want of that, of which, when it is gained, he can have no enjoyment.

It must, indeed, be allowed, that as we lose part of our time because it steals away silent and invisible, and many an hour is passed before we recollect that it is passing ; so unnatural desires insinuate themselves unobserved into the mind, and we do not

perceive that they are gaining upon us, till the pain which they give us awakens us to notice. No man is sufficiently vigilant to take account of every minute of his life, or to watch every motion of his heart. Much of our time likewise is sacrificed to custom ; we trifle, because we see others trifle : in the same manner we catch from example the contagion of desire ; we see all about us busied in pursuit of imaginary good, and begin to bustle in the same chase, lest greater activity should triumph over us.

It is true, that to man, as a member of society, many things become necessary, which, perhaps, in a state of nature are superfluous ; and that many things, not absolutely necessary, are yet so useful and convenient, that they cannot easily be spared. I will make yet a more ample and liberal concession. In opulent states and regular governments, the temptations to wealth and rank, and to the distinctions that follow them, are such as no force of understanding finds it easy to resist.

If, therefore, I saw the quiet of life disturbed only by endeavours after wealth and honour ; by solicitude, which the world, whether justly or not, considered as important ; I should scarcely have had courage to inculcate any precepts of moderation and forbearance. He that is engaged in a pursuit, in which all mankind profess to be his rivals, is supported by the authority of all mankind in the prosecution of his design, and will, therefore, scarcely stop to hear the lectures of a solitary philosopher. Nor am I certain, that the accumulation of honest gain ought to be hindered, or the ambition of just honours always to be repressed. Whatever can

enable the possessor to confer any benefit upon others, may be desired upon virtuous principles; and we ought not too rashly to accuse any man of intending to confine the influence of his acquisitions to himself.

But if we look round upon mankind, whom shall we find among those that fortune permits to form their own manners, that is not tormenting himself with a wish for something, of which all the pleasure and all the benefit will cease at the moment of attainment? One man is beggaring his posterity to build a house, which when finished he never will inhabit; another is levelling mountains to open a prospect, which, when he has once enjoyed it, he can enjoy no more; another is painting ceilings, carving wainscot, and filling his apartments with costly furniture, only that some neighbouring house may not be richer or finer than his own.

That splendour and elegance are not desirable, I am not so abstracted from life as to inculcate; but if we inquire closely into the reason for which they are esteemed, we shall find them valued principally as evidences of wealth. Nothing, therefore, can show greater depravity of understanding, than to delight in the show when the reality is wanting; or voluntarily to become poor, that strangers may for a time imagine us to be rich.

But there are yet minuter objects and more trifling anxieties. Men may be found, who are kept from sleep by the want of a shell particularly variegated! who are wasting their lives in stratagems to obtain a book in a language which they do not understand; who pine with envy at the flowers of

another man's parterre ; who hover like vultures round the owner of a fossil, in hopes to plunder his cabinet at his death ; and who would not much regret to see a street in flames, if a box of medals might be scattered in the tumult.

He that imagines me to speak of these sages in terms exaggerated and hyperbolical, has conversed but little with the race of virtuosos. A slight acquaintance with their studies, and a few visits to their assemblies, would inform him, that nothing is so worthless, but that prejudice and caprice can give it value ; nor any thing of so little use, but that by indulging an idle competition or unreasonable pride, a man may make it to himself one of the necessaries of life.

Desires like these, I may surely, without incurring the censure of moroseness, advise every man to repel when they invade his mind ; or, if he admits them, never to allow them any greater influence, than is necessary to give petty employments the power of pleasing, and diversify the day with slight amusements.

An ardent wish, whatever be its object, will always be able to interrupt tranquillity. What we believe ourselves to want, torments us not in proportion to its real value, but according to the estimation by which we have rated it in our own minds : in some diseases, the patient has been observed to long for food, which scarce any extremity of hunger would in health have compelled him to swallow ; but while his organs were thus depraved the craving was irresistible, nor could any rest be obtained till it was appeased by compliance. Of the same nature

are the irregular appetites of the mind ; though they are often excited by trifles, they are equally disquieting with real wants : the Roman, who wept at the death of his lamprey, felt the same degree of sorrow that extorts tears on other occasions.

Inordinate desires, of whatever kind, ought to be repressed upon yet a higher consideration ; they must be considered as enemies not only to happiness but to virtue. There are men among those commonly reckoned the learned and the wise, who spare no stratagems to remove a competitor at an auction, who will sink the price of a rarity at the expense of truth, and whom it is not safe to trust alone in a library or cabinet. These are faults, which the fraternity seem to look upon as jocular mischiefs, or to think excused by the violence of the temptation : but I shall always fear that he, who accustoms himself to fraud in little things, wants only opportunity to practise it in greater ; “ he that has hardened himself by killing a sheep,” says Pythagoras, “ will with less reluctance shed the blood of a man.”

To prize every thing according to its *real* use, ought to be the aim of a rational being. There are few things which can much conduce to happiness, and, therefore, few things to be ardently desired. He that looks upon the business and bustle of the world, with the philosophy with which Socrates surveyed the fair at Athens, will turn away at last with his exclamation, “ How many things are here which I do not want !”

No. 120. SATURDAY, DEC. 29, 1753.

— *Ultima semper*

Expectanda dies homini, dicique beatus

Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet. OVID.

But no frail man, however great or high,

Can be concluded blest before he die.

ADDISON.

THE numerous miseries of human life have extorted in all ages an universal complaint. The wisest of men terminated all his experiments in search of happiness, by the mournful confession, that “ all is vanity;” and the ancient patriarchs lamented, that “ the days of their pilgrimage were few and evil.”

There is, indeed, no topick on which it is more superfluous to accumulate authorities, nor any assertion of which our own eyes will more easily discover, or our sensations more frequently impress the truth, than that misery is the lot of man, that our present state is a state of danger and infelicity.

When we take the most distant prospect of life, what does it present us but a chaos of unhappiness, a confused and tumultuous scene of labour and contest, disappointment and defeat? If we view past ages in the reflection of history, what do they offer to our meditation but crimes and calamities? One year is distinguished by a famine, another by an

earthquake ; kingdoms are made desolate, sometimes by wars, and sometimes by pestilence ; the peace of the world is interrupted at one time by the caprices of a tyrant, at another by the rage of a conqueror. The memory is stored only with vicissitudes of evil ; and the happiness, such as it is, of one part of mankind, is found to arise commonly from sanguinary success, from victories which confer upon them the power, not so much of improving life by any new enjoyment, as of inflicting misery on others, and gratifying their own pride by comparative greatness.

But by him that examines life with a more close attention, the happiness of the world will be found still less than it appears. In some intervals of publick prosperity, or to use terms more proper, in some intermissions of calamity, a general diffusion of happiness may seem to overspread a people ; all is triumph and exultation, jollity and plenty ; there are no publick fears and dangers, and “ no complainings in the streets.” But the condition of individuals is very little mended by this general calm : pain and malice and discontent still continue their havock ; the silent depredation goes incessantly forward ; and the grave continues to be filled by the victims of sorrow.

He that enters a gay assembly, beholds the cheerfulness displayed in every countenance, and finds all sitting vacant and disengaged, with no other attention than to give or to receive pleasure ; would naturally imagine, that he had reached at last the metropolis of felicity, the place sacred to gladness

of heart, from whence all fear and anxiety were irreversibly excluded. Such, indeed, we may often find to be the opinion of those, who from a lower station look up to the pomp and gaiety which they cannot reach: but who is there of those who frequent these luxurious assemblies, that will not confess his own uneasiness, or cannot recount the vexations and distresses that prey upon the lives of his gay companions?

The world, in its best state, is nothing more than a larger assembly of beings, combining to counterfeit happiness which they do not feel, employing every art and contrivance to embellish life, and to hide their real condition from the eyes of one another.

The species of happiness most obvious to the observation of others, is that which depends upon the goods of fortune; yet even this is often fictitious. There is in the world more poverty than is generally imagined; not only because many whose possessions are large have desires still larger, and many measure their wants by the gratifications which others enjoy: but great numbers are pressed by real necessities which it is their chief ambition to conceal, and are forced to purchase the appearance of competence and cheerfulness at the expense of many comforts and conveniences of life.

Many, however, are confessedly rich, and many more are sufficiently removed from all danger of real poverty: but it has been long ago remarked, that money cannot purchase quiet; the highest of mankind can promise themselves no exemption from

that discord or suspicion, by which the sweetness of domestick retirement is destroyed ; and must always be even more exposed, in the same degree as they are elevated above others, to the treachery of dependents, the calumny of defamers, and the violence of opponents.

Affliction is inseparable from our present state ; it adheres to all the inhabitants of this world, in different proportions indeed, but with an allotment which seems very little regulated by our own conduct. It has been the boast of some swelling moralists, that every man's fortune was in his own power, that prudence supplied the place of all other divinities, and that happiness is the unfailing consequence of virtue. But, surely, the quiver of Omnipotence is stored with arrows, against which the shield of human virtue, however adamantine it has been boasted, is held up in vain : we do not always suffer by our crimes ; we are not always protected by our innocence.

A good man is by no means exempt from the danger of suffering by the crimes of others ; even his goodness may raise him enemies of implacable malice and restless perseverance : the good man has never been warranted by Heaven from the treachery of friends, the disobedience of children, or the dishonesty of a wife ; he may see his cares made useless by profusion, his instructions defeated by perverseness, and his kindness rejected by ingratitude ; he may languish under the infamy of false accusations, or perish reproachfully by an unjust sentence.

, A good man is subject, like other mortals, to all the influences of natural evil ; his harvest is not spared by the tempest, nor his cattle by the murrain ; his house flames like others in a conflagration ; nor have his ships any peculiar power of resisting hurricanes : his mind, however elevated, inhabits a body subject to innumerable casualties, of which he must always share the dangers and the pains ; he bears about him the seeds of disease, and may linger away a great part of his life under the tortures of the gout or stone ; at one time groaning with insufferable anguish, at another dissolved in listlessness and languor.

From this general and indiscriminate distribution of misery, the moralists have always derived one of their strongest moral arguments for a future state ; for since the common events of the present life happen alike to the good and bad, it follows from the justice of the Supreme Being, that there must be another state of existence, in which a just retribution shall be made, and every man shall be happy and miserable according to his works.

The miseries of life may, perhaps, afford some proof of a future state, compared as well with the mercy as the justice of God. It is scarcely to be imagined, that Infinite Benevolence would create a being capable of enjoying so much more than is here to be enjoyed, and qualified by nature to prolong pain by remembrance, and anticipate it by terror, if he was not designed for something nobler and better than a state, in which many

of his faculties can serve only for his torment ; in which he is to be importuned by desires that never can be satisfied, to feel many evils which he had no power to avoid, and to fear many which he shall never feel : there will surely come a time when every capacity of happiness shall be filled, and none shall be wretched but by his own fault.

In the mean time, it is by affliction chiefly that the heart of man is purified, and that the thoughts are fixed upon a better state. Prosperity, allayed and imperfect as it is, has power to intoxicate the imagination, to fix the mind upon the present scene, to produce confidence and elation, and to make him who enjoys affluence and honours forget the hand by which they were bestowed. It is seldom that we are otherwise, than by affliction, awakened to a sense of our own imbecility, or taught to know how little all our acquisitions can conduce to safety or to quiet ; and how justly we may ascribe to the superintendence of a higher Power, those blessings which in the wantonness of success we considered as the attainments of our policy or courage.

Nothing confers so much ability to resist the temptations that perpetually surround us, as an habitual consideration of the shortness of life, and the uncertainty of those pleasures that solicit our pursuit ; and this consideration can be inculcated only by affliction. “ O Death ! how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that lives at ease in his possessions ! ” If our present state were one

continued succession of delights, or one uniform flow of calmness and tranquillity, we should never willingly think upon its end; death would then surely surprise us as "a thief in the night;" and our task of duty would remain unfinished, till "the night came when no man can work."

While affliction thus prepares us for felicity, we may console ourselves under its pressures, by remembering, that they are no particular marks of divine displeasure; since all the distresses of persecution have been suffered by those, "of whom the world was not worthy;" and the Redeemer of mankind himself was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

No. 126. SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 1754.

— *Steriles nec legit arenas*
Ut caneret paucis mersitque hoc pulvere rerum. LUCAN.

Canst thou believe the vast eternal Mind
 Was e'er to Syrt and Libyan sands confin'd?
 That he would choose this waste, this barren ground,
 To teach the thin inhabitants around,
 And leave his truth in wilds and deserts drown'd?

THERE has always prevailed among that part of mankind that addict their minds to speculation, a propensity to talk much of the delights of retirement; and some of the most pleasing compositions

produced in every age contain descriptions of the peace and happiness of a country life.

I know not whether those who thus ambitiously repeat the praises of solitude, have always considered how much they deprecate mankind by declaring, that whatever is excellent or desirable is to be obtained by departing from them ; that the assistance which we may derive from one another, is not equivalent to the evils which we have to fear ; that the kindness of a few is overbalanced by the malice of many ; and that the protection of society is too dearly purchased, by encountering its dangers and enduring its oppressions.

These specious representations of solitary happiness, however opprobrious to human nature, have so far spread their influence over the world, that almost every man delights his imagination with the hopes of obtaining some time an opportunity of retreat. Many, indeed, who enjoy retreat only in imagination, content themselves with believing, that another year will transport them to rural tranquillity, and die while they talk of doing what, if they had lived longer, they would never have done. But many likewise there are, either of greater resolution or more credulity, who in earnest try the state which they have been taught to think thus secure from cares and dangers ; and retire to privacy, either that they may improve their happiness, increase their knowledge, or exalt their virtue.

The greater part of the admirers of solitude, as of all other classes of mankind, have no higher or

remoter view, than the present gratification of their passions. Of these some, haughty and impetuous, fly from society only because they cannot bear to repay to others the regard which themselves exact ; and think no state of life eligible, but that which places them out of the reach of censure or control, and affords them opportunities of living in a perpetual compliance with their own inclinations, without the necessity of regulating their actions by any other man's convenience or opinion.

There are others of minds more delicate and tender, easily offended by every deviation from rectitude, soon disgusted by ignorance or impertinence, and always expecting from the conversation of mankind more elegance, purity, and truth, than the mingled mass of life will easily afford. Such men are in haste to retire from grossness, falsehood, and brutality ; and hope to find in private habitations at least a negative felicity, an exemption from the shocks and perturbations with which publick scenes are continually distressing them.

To neither of these votaries will solitude afford that content, which she has been taught so lavishly to promise. The man of arrogance will quickly discover, that by escaping from his opponents he has lost his flatterers, that greatness is nothing where it is not seen, and power nothing where it cannot be felt : and he, whose faculties are employed in too close an observation of failings and defects, will find his condition very little mended by transferring his attention from others to himself ; he will probably soon come back in quest of new objects, and be glad

to keep his captiousness employed on any character rather than his own.

Others are seduced into solitude merely by the authority of great names, and expect to find those charms in tranquillity which have allured statesmen and conquerors, to the shades : these likewise are apt to wonder at their disappointment, for want of considering, that those whom they aspire to imitate carried with them to their country seats minds full fraught with subjects of reflection, the consciousness of great merit, the memory of illustrious actions, the knowledge of important events, and the seeds of mighty designs to be ripened by future meditation. Solitude was to such men a release from fatigue, and an opportunity of usefulness. But what can retirement confer upon him, who having done nothing can receive no support from his own importance, who having known nothing can find no entertainment in reviewing the past, and who intending nothing can form no hopes from prospects of the future? He can, surely, take no wiser course than that of losing himself again in the crowd, and filling the vacuities of his mind with the news of the day.

Others consider solitude as the parent of philosophy, and retire in expectation of greater intimacies with science, as Numa repaired to the groves when he conferred with Egeria. These men have not always reason to repent. Some studies require a continued prosecution of the same train of thought, such as is too often interrupted by the petty avocations of common life : sometimes, likewise, it is necessary, that a multiplicity of objects be at once

present to the mind ; and every thing, therefore, must be kept at a distance, which may perplex the memory, or dissipate the attention.

But though learning may be conferred by solitude, its application must be attained by general converse. He has learned to no purpose, that is not able to teach ; and he will always teach unsuccessfully, who cannot recommend his sentiments by his diction or address.

Even the acquisition of knowledge is often much facilitated by the advantages of society : he that never compares his notions with those of others, readily acquiesces in his first thoughts, and very seldom discovers the objections which may be raised against his opinions ; he, therefore, often thinks himself in possession of truth, when he is only fondling an error long since exploded. He that has neither companions nor rivals in his studies, will always applaud his own progress, and think highly of his performances, because he knows not that others have equalled or excelled him. And I am afraid it may be added, that the student who withdraws himself from the world, will soon feel that ardour extinguished which praise or emulation had enkindled, and take the advantage of secrecy to sleep, rather than to labour.

There remains yet another set of recluses, whose intention entitles them to higher respect, and whose motives deserve a more serious consideration. These retire from the world, not merely to bask in ease or gratify curiosity ; but that, being disengaged from common cares, they may employ more time in the duties of religion ; that they may regulate their

actions with stricter vigilance, and purify their thoughts by more frequent meditation.

To men thus elevated above the mists of mortality, I am far from presuming myself qualified to give directions. On him that appears “to pass through things temporary,” with no other care than “not to lose finally the things eternal,” I look with such veneration as inclines me to approve his conduct in the whole, without a minute examination of its parts ; yet I could never forbear to wish, that while vice is every day multiplying seducements, and stalking forth with more hardened effrontery, virtue would not withdraw the influence of her presence, or forbear to assert her natural dignity by open and undaunted perseverance in the right. Piety practised in solitude, like the flower that blooms in the desert, may give its fragrance to the winds of Heaven, and delight those unbodied spirits that survey the works of God and the actions of men ; but it bestows no assistance upon earthly beings, and, however free from taints of impurity, yet wants the sacred splendour of beneficence.

Our Maker, who, though he gave us such varieties of temper, and such difference of powers, yet designed us all for happiness, undoubtedly intended, that we should obtain that happiness by different means. Some are unable to resist the temptations of importunity, or the impetuosity of their own passions incited by the force of present temptations : of these it is undoubtedly the duty to fly from enemies which they cannot conquer, and to cultivate, in the calm of solitude, that virtue which is too tender to endure the tempests of pub-

lick life. But there are others, whose passions grow more strong and irregular in privacy; and who cannot maintain an uniform tenour of virtue, but by exposing their manners to the publick eye, and assisting the admonitions of conscience with the fear of infamy: for such it is dangerous to exclude all witnesses of their conduct, till they have formed strong habits of virtue, and weakened their passions by frequent victories. But there is a higher order of men so inspired with ardour, and so fortified with resolution, that the world passes before them without influence or regard: these ought to consider themselves as appointed the guardians of mankind: they are placed in an evil world, to exhibit publick examples of good life; and may be said, when they withdraw to solitude, to desert the station which Providence assigned them.

No. 131. TUESDAY, FEB. 5, 1754.

— Misce

Ergo aliquid nostris de moribus.

JUVENAL.

And mingle something of our times to please.

DRYDEN, Jun.

FONTENELLE, in his panegyrick on Sir Isaac Newton, closes a long enumeration of that great philosopher's virtues and attainments, with an observation, that “ he was not distinguished from other men, by any singularity either natural or affected.”

It is an eminent instance of Newton's superiority to the rest of mankind, that he was able to separate knowledge from those weaknesses by which knowledge is generally disgraced ; that he was able to excel in science and wisdom, without purchasing them by the neglect of little things ; and that he stood alone, merely because he had left the rest of mankind behind him, not because he deviated from the beaten track.

Whoever, after the example of Plutarch, should compare the lives of illustrious men, might set this part of Newton's character to view with great advantage, by opposing it to that of Bacon, perhaps the only man of later ages, who has any pretensions to dispute with him the palm of genius or science.

Bacon, after he had added to a long and careful contemplation of almost every other object of knowledge a curious inspection into common life, and after having surveyed nature as a philosopher, had examined “men’s business and bosoms” as a statesman; yet failed so much in the conduct of domestick affairs, that, in the most lucrative post to which a great and wealthy kingdom could advance him, he felt all the miseries of distressful poverty, and committed all the crimes to which poverty incites. Such were at once his negligence and rapacity, that, as it is said, he would gain by unworthy practices that money, which, when so acquired, his servants might steal from one end of the table, while he sat studious and abstracted at the other.

As scarcely any man has reached the excellence, very few have sunk to the weakness of Bacon: but almost all the studious tribe, as they obtain any participation of his knowledge, feel likewise some contagion of his defects; and obstruct the veneration which learning would procure, by follies greater or less, to which only learning could betray them.

It has been formerly remarked by *The Guardian*, that the world punishes with too great severity the error of those, who imagine that the ignorance of little things may be compensated by the knowledge of great; for so it is, that as more can detect petty failings than can distinguish or esteem great qualifications, and as mankind is in general more easily disposed to censure than to admiration, contempt is often incurred by slight mistakes, which real virtue or usefulness cannot counterbalance.

Yet such mistakes and inadvertencies, it is not easy for a man deeply immersed in study to avoid; no man can become qualified for the common intercourses of life by private meditation; the manners of the world are not a regular system, planned by philosophers upon settled principles, in which every cause has a congruous effect, and one part has a just reference to another. Of the fashions prevalent in every country, a few have arisen, perhaps, from particular temperatures of the climate; a few more from the constitution of the government; but the greater part have grown up by chance; been started by caprice, been contrived by affectation, or borrowed without any just motives of choice from other countries.

Of all these, the savage that hunts his prey upon the mountains, and the sage that speculates in his closet, must necessarily live in equal ignorance; yet by the observation of these trifles it is, that the ranks of mankind are kept in order, that the address of one to another is regulated, and the general business of the world carried on with facility and method.

These things, therefore, though small in themselves, become great by their frequency; and he very much mistakes his own interest, who, to the unavoidable unskilfulness of abstraction and retirement, adds a voluntary neglect of common forms, and increases the disadvantages of a studious course of life by an arrogant contempt of those practices, by which others endeavour to gain favour and multiply friendships.

A real and interior disdain of fashion and cere-

mony, is, indeed; not very often to be found: much the greater part of those who pretend to laugh at foppery and formality, secretly wish to have possessed those qualifications which they pretend to despise; and because they find it difficult to wash away the tincture which they have so deeply imbibed, endeavour to harden themselves in a sullen approbation of their own colour. Neutrality is a state into which the busy passions of man cannot easily subside; and he who is in danger of the pangs of envy, is generally forced to recreate his imagination with an effort of comfort.

Some, however, may be found, who, supported by the consciousness of great abilities, and elevated by a long course of reputation and applause, voluntarily consign themselves to singularity, affect to cross the roads of life because they know that they shall not be justled, and indulge a boundless gratification of will, because they perceive that they shall be quietly obeyed. Men of this kind are generally known by the name of *Humorists*, an appellation by which he that has obtained it, and can be contented to keep it, is set free at once from the shackles of fashion: and can go in or out, sit or stand, be talkative or silent, gloomy or merry, advance absurdities or oppose demonstration, without any other reprehension from mankind; than that it is his way, that he is an odd fellow, and must be let alone.

This seems to many an easy passport through the various factions of mankind; and those on whom it is bestowed, appear too frequently to consider the patience with which their caprices are suffered as an undoubted evidence of their own importance, of a

genius to which submission is universally paid, and whose irregularities are only considered as consequences of its vigour. These peculiarities, however, are always found to spot a character, though they may not totally obscure it; and he who expects from mankind, that they should give up established customs in compliance with his single will, and exacts that deference which he does not pay, may be endured, but can never be approved.

Singularity is, I think, in its own nature universally and invariably displeasing. In whatever respect a man differs from others, he must be considered by them as either worse or better: by being better, it is well known that a man gains admiration oftener than love, since all approbation of his practice must necessarily condemn him that gives it; and though a man often pleases by inferiority, there are few who desire to give such pleasure. Yet the truth is, that singularity is almost always regarded as a brand of slight reproach; and where it is associated with acknowledged merit, serves as an abatement or an allay of excellence, by which weak eyes are reconciled to its lustre, and by which, though kindness is not gained, at least envy is averted.

But let no man be in haste to conclude his own merit so great or conspicuous, as to require or justify singularity: it is as hazardous for a moderate understanding to usurp the prerogatives of genius, as for a common form to play over the airs of uncontested beauty. The pride of men will not patiently endure to see one, whose understanding or attainments are but level with their own, break the rules by which they have consented to be bound, or forsake the direction which they submissively follow. All viola-

tion of established practice implies in its own nature a rejection of the common opinion, a defiance of common censure, and an appeal from general laws to private judgment: he, therefore, who differs from others without apparent advantage, ought not to be angry if his arrogance is punished with ridicule; if those, whose example he superciliously overlooks, point him out to derision, and hoot him back again into the common road.

The pride of singularity is often exerted in little things, where right and wrong are indeterminable, and where, therefore, vanity is without excuse. But there are occasions on which it is noble to dare to stand alone. To be pious among infidels, to be disinterested in a time of general venality, to lead a life of virtue and reason in the midst of sensualists, is a proof of a mind intent on nobler things than the praise or blame of men, of a soul fixed in the contemplation of the highest good, and superior to the tyranny of custom and example.

In moral and religious questions only, a wise man will hold no consultations with fashion, because these duties are constant and immutable, and depend not on the notions of men, but the commands of Heaven: yet even of these, the external mode is to be in some measure regulated by the prevailing taste of the age in which we live; for he is certainly no friend to virtue, who neglects to give it any lawful attraction, or suffers it to deceive the eye or alienate the affections for want of innocent compliance with fashionable decorations.

It is yet remembered of the learned and pious Nelson, that he was remarkably elegant in his man-

ners, and splendid in his dress. He knew, that the eminence of his character drew many eyes upon him ; and he was careful not to drive the young or the gay away from religion, by representing it as an enemy to any distinction or enjoyment in which human nature may innocently delight.

In this censure of singularity, I have, therefore, no intention to subject reason or conscience to custom or example. To comply with the notions and practices of mankind, is in some degree the duty of a social being ; because by compliance only he can please, and by pleasing only he can become useful : but as the end is not to be lost for the sake of the means, we are not to give up virtue to complaisance ; for the end of complaisance is only to gain the kindness of our fellow-beings, whose kindness is desirable only as instrumental to happiness, and happiness must be always lost by departure from virtue.

No. 137. TUESDAY, FEB. 26, 1754.

Ti δὲ ἐγέγα;

PYTH.

What have I been doing?

As man is a being very sparingly furnished with the power of prescience, he can provide for the future only by considering the past ; and as futurity is all in which he has any real interest, he ought very diligently to use the only means by which he can be enabled to enjoy it, and frequently to revolve the experiments which he has hitherto made upon life, that he may gain wisdom from his mistakes, and caution from his miscarriages.

Though I do not so exactly conform to the precepts of Pythagoras, as to practise every night this solemn recollection, yet I am not so lost in dissipation as wholly to omit it ; nor can I forbear sometimes to inquire of myself, in what employment my life has passed away. Much of my time has sunk into nothing, and left no trace by which it can be distinguished ; and of this I now only know, that it was once in my power, and might once have been improved.

Of other parts of life memory can give some account ; at some hours I have been gay, and at others serious ; I have sometimes mingled in conversation, and sometimes meditated in solitude ; one day has

been spent in consulting the ancient sages, and another in writing *Adventurers*.

At the conclusion of any undertaking, it is usual to compute the loss and profit. As I shall soon cease to write *Adventurers*, I could not forbear lately to consider what has been the consequence of my labours; and whether I am to reckon the hours laid out in these compositions, as applied to a good and laudable purpose, or suffered to fume away in useless evaporation.

That I have intended well, I have the attestation of my own heart: but good intentions may be frustrated when they are executed without suitable skill, or directed to an end unattainable in itself.

Some there are, who leave writers very little room for self-congratulation; some who affirm, that books have no influence upon the publick, that no age was ever made better by its authors, and that to call upon mankind to correct their manners, is like Xerxes, to scourge the wind, or shackle the torrent.

This opinion they pretend to support by unfailling experience. The world is full of fraud and corruption, rapine or malignity; interest is the ruling motive of mankind, and every one is endeavouring to increase his own stores of happiness by perpetual accumulation, without reflecting upon the numbers whom his superfluity condemns to want: in this state of things a book of morality is published, in which charity and benevolence are strongly enforced; and it is proved beyond opposition, that men are happy in proportion as they are virtuous, and rich as they are liberal. The book is applauded, and the author is preferred; he imagines

his applause deserved, and receives less pleasure from the acquisition of reward than the consciousness of merit. Let us look again upon mankind : interest is still the ruling motive, and the world is yet full of fraud and corruption, malevolence and rapine.

The difficulty of confuting this assertion arises merely from its generality and comprehension : to overthrow it by a detail of distinct facts, requires a wider survey of the world than human eyes can take ; the progress of reformation is gradual and silent, as the extension of evening shadows ; we know that they were short at noon, and are long at sunset, but our senses were not able to discern their increase : we know of every civil nation, that it was once savage, and how was it reclaimed but by precept and admonition ?

Mankind are universally corrupt, but corrupt in different degrees ; as they are universally ignorant, yet with greater or less irradiations of knowledge. How has knowledge or virtue been increased and preserved in one place beyond another, but by diligent inculcation and rational enforcement ?

Books of morality are daily written, yet its influence is still little in the world ; so the ground is annually ploughed, and yet multitudes are in want of bread. But, surely, neither the labours of the moralist nor of the husbandman are vain : let them for a while neglect their tasks, and their usefulness will be known ; the wickedness that is now frequent would become universal, the bread that is now scarce would wholly fail.

The power, indeed, of every individual is small,

and the consequence of his endeavours imperceptible in a general prospect of the world. Providence has given no man ability to do much, that something might be left for every man to do. The business of life is carried on by a general co-operation ; in which the part of any single man can be no more distinguished, than the effect of a particular drop when the meadows are floated by a summer shower : yet every drop increases the inundation, and every hand adds to the happiness or misery of mankind.

That a writer, however zealous or eloquent, seldom works a visible effect upon cities or nations, will readily be granted. The book which is read most, is read by few, compared with those that read it not ; and of those few, the greater part peruse it with dispositions that very little favour their own improvement.

It is difficult to enumerate the several motives which procure to books the honour of perusal : spite, vanity, and curiosity, hope and fear, love and hatred, every passion which incites to any other action, serves at one time or other to stimulate a reader.

Some are fond to take a celebrated volume into their hands, because they hope to distinguish their penetration, by finding faults which have escaped the publick ; others eagerly buy it in the first bloom of reputation, that they may join the chorus of praise, and not lag, as Falstaff terms it, in “ the rearward of the fashion.”

Some read for style, and some for argument : one has little care about the sentiment, he observes only

how it is expressed ; another regards not the conclusion, but is diligent to mark how it is inferred : they read for other purposes than the attainment of practical knowledge ; and are no more likely to grow wise by an examination of a treatise of moral prudence, than an architect to inflame his devotion by considering attentively the proportions of a temple.

Some read that they may embellish their conversation, or shine in dispute ; some that they may not be detected in ignorance, or want the reputation of literary accomplishments : but the most general and prevalent reason of study is the impossibility of finding another amusement equally cheap or constant, equally independent on the hour or the weather. He that wants money to follow the chase of pleasure through her yearly circuit, and is left at home when the gay world rolls to Bath or Tunbridge ; he whose gout compels him to hear from his chamber the rattle of chariots transporting happier beings to plays and assemblies, will be forced to seek in books a refuge from himself.

The author is not wholly useless, who provides innocent amusements for minds like these. There are in the present state of things so many more instigations to evil, than incitements to good, that he who keeps men in a neutral state, may be justly considered as a benefactor to life.

But, perhaps, it seldom happens, that study terminates in mere pastime. Books have always a secret influence on the understanding ; we cannot at pleasure obliterate ideas : he that reads books of science, though without any fixed desire of im-

provement, will grow more knowing ; he that entertains himself with moral or religious treatises, will imperceptibly advance in goodness ; the ideas which are often offered to the mind, will at last find a lucky moment when it is disposed to receive them.

It is, therefore, urged without reason, as a discouragement to writers, that there are already books sufficient in the world ; that all the topicks of persuasion have been discussed, and every important question clearly stated and justly decided ; and that, therefore, there is no room to hope, that pygmies should conquer where heroes have been defeated, or that the petty copiers of the present time should advance the great work of reformation, which their predecessors were forced to leave unfinished.

Whatever be the present extent of human knowledge, it is not only finite, and therefore in its own nature capable of increase ; but so narrow, that almost every understanding may, by a diligent application of its powers, hope to enlarge it. It is, however, not necessary, that a man should forbear to write, till he has discovered some truth unknown before ; he may be sufficiently useful, by only diversifying the surface of knowledge, and luring the mind by a new appearance to a second view of those beauties which it had passed over inattentively before. Every writer may find intellects correspondent to his own, to whom his expressions are familiar, and his thoughts congenial ; and, perhaps, truth is often more successfully propagated by men of moderate abilities, who, adopting the opinions of

others, have no care but to explain them clearly, than by subtle speculatists and curious searchers, who exact from their readers powers equal to their own, and if their fabrics of science be strong, take no care to render them accessible.

For my part, I do not regret the hours which I have laid out in these little compositions. That the world has grown apparently better, since the publication of the Adventurer, I have not observed; but am willing to think, that many have been affected by single sentiments, of which it is their business to renew the impression; that many have caught hints of truth, which it is now their duty to pursue; and that those who have received no improvement, have wanted not opportunity but intention to improve.

No. 138. SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 1754.

*Quid purè tranquillet? honos, an dulce lucellum,
An secretum iter, et fallentis semita vita? Hor.*

Whether the tranquil mind and pure,
Honours or wealth our bliss ensure;
Or down through life unknown to stray,
Where lonely leads the silent way.

FRANCIS.

HAVING considered the importance of authors to the welfare of the publick, I am led, by a natural train of thought, to reflect on their condition with regard to themselves; and to inquire what degree of happiness or vexation is annexed to the difficult and laborious employment of providing instruction or entertainment for mankind.

In estimating the pain or pleasure of any particular state, every man, indeed, draws his decisions from his own breast, and cannot with certainty determine, whether other minds are affected by the same causes in the same manner. Yet by this criterion we must be content to judge, because no other can be obtained; and, indeed, we have no reason to think it very fallacious, for excepting here and there an anomalous mind, which either does not feel like others, or dissembles its sensibility, we find men unanimously concur in attributing happiness or misery to particular conditions, as they agree in acknowledging the cold of winter and the heat of autumn.

If we apply to authors themselves for an account

of their state, it will appear very little to deserve envy; for they have in all ages been addicted to complaint. The neglect of learning, the ingratitudo of the present age, and the absurd preference by which ignorance and dulness often obtain favour and rewards, have been from age to age topicks of invective; and few have left their names to posterity, without some appeal to future candour from the perverseness and malice of their own times.

I have, nevertheless, been often inclined to doubt, whether authors, however querulous, are in reality more miserable than their fellow mortals. The present life is to all a state of infelicity; every man, like an author, believes himself to merit more than he obtains, and solaces the present with the prospect of the future: others, indeed, suffer those disappointments in silence, of which the writer complains, to show how well he has learnt the art of lamentation.

There is at least one gleam of felicity, of which few writers have missed the enjoyment: he whose hopes have so far overpowered his fears, as that he has resolved to stand forth a candidate for fame, seldom fails to amuse himself, before his appearance, with pleasing scenes of affluence or honour; while his fortune is yet under the regulation of fancy, he easily models it to his wish, suffers no thoughts of criticks or rivals to intrude upon his mind, but counts over the bounties of patronage, or listens to the voice of praise.

Some there are, that talk very luxuriously of the second period of an author's happiness, and tell of the tumultuous raptures of invention, when the

mind riots in imagery, and the choice stands suspended between different sentiments.

These pleasures, I believe, may sometimes be indulged to those, who come to a subject of disquisition with minds full of ideas, and with fancies so vigorous, as easily to excite, select, and arrange them. To write is, indeed, no unpleasing employment, when one sentiment readily produces another, and both ideas and expressions present themselves at the first summons: but such happiness, the greatest genius does not always obtain; and common writers know it only to such a degree, as to credit its possibility. Composition is, for the most part, an effort of slow diligence and steady perseverance, to which the mind is dragged by necessity or resolution, and from which the attention is every moment starting to more delightful amusements.

It frequently happens, that a design which, when considered at a distance, gave flattering hopes of facility, mocks us in the execution with unexpected difficulties; the mind which, while it considered it in the gross, imagined itself amply furnished with materials, finds sometimes an unexpected barrenness and vacuity, and wonders whither all those ideas are vanished, which a little before seemed struggling for emission.

Sometimes many thoughts present themselves; but so confused and unconnected, that they are not without difficulty reduced to method, or concatenated, in a regular and dependent series: the mind falls at once into a labyrinth, of which neither the beginning nor end can be discovered, and toils and struggles without progress or extrication.

It is asserted by Horace, that “if matter be once got together, words will be found with very little difficulty;” a position which, though sufficiently plausible to be inserted in poetical precepts, is by no means strictly and philosophically true. If words were naturally and necessarily consequential to sentiments, it would always follow, that he who has most knowledge must have most eloquence, and that every man would clearly express what he fully understood: yet we find, that to think, and discourse, are often the qualities of different persons: and many books might surely be produced, where just and noble sentiments are degraded and obscured by unsuitable diction. .

Words, therefore, as well as things, claim the care of an author. Indeed, of many authors, and those not useless or contemptible, words are almost the only care: many make it their study, not so much to strike out new sentiments, as to recommend those which are already known to more favourable notice by fairer decorations; but every man, whether he copies or invents, whether he delivers his own thoughts or those of another, has often found himself deficient in the power of expression, big with ideas which he could not utter, obliged to ransack his memory for terms adequate to his conceptions, and at last unable to impress upon his reader the image existing in his own mind.

It is one of the common distresses of a writer, to be within a word of a happy period, to want only a single epithet to give amplification its full force, to require only a correspondent term in order to finish a paragraph with elegance, and make one of its

members answer to the other: but these deficiencies cannot always be supplied; and after a long study and vexation, the passage is turned anew, and the web unwoven that was so nearly finished.

But when thoughts and words are collected and adjusted, and the whole composition at last concluded, it seldom gratifies the author, when he comes coolly and deliberately to review it, with the hopes which had been excited in the fury of the performance: novelty always captivates the mind; as our thoughts rise fresh upon us, we readily believe them just and original, which, when the pleasure of production is over, we find to be mean and common, or borrowed from the works of others, and supplied by memory rather than invention.

But though it should happen that the writer finds no such faults in his performance, he is still to remember, that he looks upon it with partial eyes: and when he considers, how much men who could judge of others with great exactness, have often failed of judging of themselves, he will be afraid of deciding too hastily in his own favour, or of allowing himself to contemplate with too much complacence, treasure that has not yet been brought to the test, nor passed the only trial that can stamp its value.

From the publick, and only from the publick, is he to await a confirmation of his claim, and a final justification of self-esteem; but the publick is not easily persuaded to favour an author. If mankind were left to judge for themselves, it is reasonable to imagine, that of such writings, at least, as describe the movements of the human passions, and of which every man carries the archetype within him, a just

opinion would be formed; but whoever has remarked the fate of books, must have found it governed by other causes than general consent arising from general conviction. If a new performance happens not to fall into the hands of some, who have courage to tell, and authority to propagate their opinion, it often remains long in obscurity, and perishes unknown and unexamined. A few, a very few, commonly constitute the taste of the time; the judgment which they have once pronounced, some are too lazy to discuss, and some too timorous to contradict: it may however be, I think, observed, that their power is greater to depress than exalt, as mankind are more credulous of censure than of praise.

This perversion of the publick judgment is not to be rashly numbered amongst the miseries of an author; since it commonly serves, after miscarriage, to reconcile him to himself. Because the world has sometimes passed an unjust sentence, he readily concludes the sentence unjust by which his performance is condemned; because some have been exalted above their merits by partiality, he is sure to ascribe the success of a rival, not to the merit of his work, but the zeal of his patrons. Upon the whole, as the author seems to share all the common miseries of life, he appears to partake likewise of its lenitives and abatements.



THE
HISTORY
OR
R A S S E L A S,
PRINCE OF ABISSINIA.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTION OF A PALACE IN A VALLEY.

YE who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope ; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow ; attend to the history of Rasselas prince of Abissinia.

Rasselas was the fourth son of the mighty emperor, in whose dominions the Father of Waters begins his course ; whose bounty pours down the streams of plenty, and scatters over half the world the harvests of Egypt.

According to the custom which has descended from age to age among the monarchs of the torrid zone, Rasselas was confined in a private palace, with the other sons and daughters of Abissinian royalty, till the order of succession should call him to the throne.

The place, which the wisdom or policy of antiquity had destined for the residence of the Abissi-

nian princes, was a spacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara, surrounded on every side by mountains, of which the summits overhang the middle part. The only passage, by which it could be entered, was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it has long been disputed whether it was the work of nature or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by thick wood, and the mouth which opened into the valley was closed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massy that no man could without the help of engines open or shut them.

From the mountains on every side, rivulets descended that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice till it was heard no more.

The sides of the mountains were covered with trees, the banks of the brooks were diversified with flowers ; every blast shook spices from the rocks, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the grass, or brouse the shrub, whether wild or tame, wandered in this extensive circuit, secured from beasts of prey by the mountains which confined them. On one part were flocks and herds feeding in the pastures, on another all the beasts of chase frisking in the lawns ; the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the solemn elephant

reposing in the shade. All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

The valley, wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with the necessaries of life, and all delights and superfluities were added at the annual visit which the emperour paid his children, when the iron gate was opened to the sound of musick ; and during eight days every one that resided in the valley was required to propose whatever might contribute to make seclusion pleasant, to fill up the vacancies of attention, and lessen the tediousness of time. Every desire was immediately granted. All the artificers of pleasure were called to gladden the festivity ; the musicians exerted the power of harmony, and the dancers showed their activity before the princes, in hope that they should pass their lives in this blissful captivity, to which those only were admitted whose performance was thought able to add novelty to luxury. Such was the appearance of security and delight which this retirement afforded, that they, to whom it was new, always desired that it might be perpetual ; and as those, on whom the iron gate had once closed, were never suffered to return, the effect of longer experience could not be known. Thus every year produced new schemes of delight, and new competitors for imprisonment.

The palace stood on an eminence raised about thirty paces above the surface of the lake. It was divided into many squares or courts, built with greater or less magnificence, according to the rank

of those for whom they were designed. The roofs were turned into arches of massy stone joined by a cement that grew harder by time, and the building stood from century to century deriding the solstitial rains and equinoctial hurricanes, without need of reparation.

This house, which was so large as to be fully known to none but some ancient officers who successively inherited the secrets of the place, was built as if suspicion herself had dictated the plan. To every room there was an open and secret passage, every square had a communication with the rest, either from the upper stories by private galleries, or by subterranean passages from the lower apartments. Many of the columns had unsuspected cavities, in which a long race of monarchs had deposited their treasures. They then closed up the opening with marble, which was never to be removed but in the utmost exigencies of the kingdom ; and recorded their accumulations in a book which was itself concealed in a tower not entered but by the emperor, attended by the prince who stood next in succession.

CHAPTER II.

THE DISCONTENT OF RASSELAS IN THE HAPPY VALLEY.

HERE the sons and daughters of Abissinia lived only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose, attended by all that were skilful to delight, and gratified with whatever the senses can enjoy.

They wandered in gardens of fragrance, and slept in the fortresses of security. Every art was practised to make them pleased with their own condition. The sages who instructed them, told them of nothing but the miseries of publick life, and described all beyond the mountains as regions of calamity, where discord was always raging, and where man preyed upon man.

To heighten their opinion of their own felicity, they were daily entertained with songs, the subject of which was the happy valley. Their appetites were excited by frequent enumerations of different enjoyments, and revelry and merriment was the business of every hour from the dawn of morning to the close of even.

These methods were generally successful ; few of the princes had ever wished to enlarge their bounds, but passed their lives in full conviction that they had all within their reach that art or nature could bestow, and pitied those whom fate had excluded from this seat of tranquillity, as the sport of chance and the slaves of misery.

Thus they rose in the morning and lay down at night, pleased with each other and with themselves, all but Rasselas, who in the twenty-sixth year of his age began to withdraw himself from their pastimes and assemblies, and to delight in solitary walks and silent meditation. He often sat before tables covered with luxury, and forgot to taste the dainties that were placed before him : he rose abruptly in the midst of the song, and hastily retired beyond the sound of musick. His attendants observed the change, and endeavoured to renew his love of plea-

sure: he neglected their officiousness, repulsed their invitations, and spent day after day on the banks of rivulets sheltered with trees, where he sometimes listened to the birds in the branches, sometimes observed the fish playing in the stream, and anon cast his eyes upon the pastures and mountains filled with animals, of which some were biting the herbage, and some sleeping among the bushes.

This singularity of his humour made him much observed. One of the sages, in whose conversation he had formerly delighted, followed him secretly, in hope of discovering the cause of his disquiet. Rasselas, who knew not that any one was near him, having for some time fixed his eyes upon the goats that were browsing among the rocks, began to compare their condition with his own.

“ What,” said he, “ makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation? Every beast that strays beside me has the same corporal necessities with myself; he is hungry and crops the grass, he is thirsty and drinks the stream, his thirst and hunger are appeased, he is satisfied and sleeps; he rises again and is hungry, he is again fed and is at rest. I am hungry and thirsty like him, but when thirst and hunger cease I am not at rest; I am, like him, pained with want, but am not, like him, satisfied with fulness. The intermediate hours are tedious and gloomy; I long again to be hungry that I may again quicken my attention. The birds peck the berries or the corn, and fly away to the groves, where they sit in seeming happiness on the branches, and waste their lives in tuning one unvaried series of sounds. I likewise

can call the lutanist and the singer, but the sounds that pleased me yesterday weary me to-day, and will grow yet more wearisome to-morrow. I can discover within me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted. Man surely has some latent sense for which this place affords no gratification, or he has some desires distinct from sense, which must be satisfied before he can be happy."

After this he lifted up his head, and seeing the moon rising, walked towards the palace. As he passed through the fields, and saw the animals around him, "Ye," said he, "are happy, and need not envy me that walk thus among you, burdened with myself; nor do I, ye gentle beings, envy your felicity; for it is not the felicity of man. I have many distresses from which ye are free; I fear pain when I do not feel it; I sometimes shrink at evils recollected, and sometimes start at evils anticipated: surely the equity of Providence has balanced peculiar sufferings with peculiar enjoyments."

With observations like these the prince amused himself as he returned, uttering them with a plaintive voice, yet with a look that discovered him to feel some complacence in his own perspicacity, and to receive some solace of the miseries of life, from consciousness of the delicacy with which he felt; and the eloquence with which he bewailed them. He mingled cheerfully in the diversions of the evening, and all rejoiced to find that his heart was lightened.

CHAPTER III.

THE WANTS OF HIM THAT WANTS NOTHING.

ON the next day his old instructor, imagining that he had now made himself acquainted with his disease of mind, was in hope of curing it by counsel, and officiously sought an opportunity of conference, which the prince, having long considered him as one whose intellects were exhausted, was not very willing to afford : “ Why,” said he, “ does this man thus intrude upon me? shall I be never suffered to forget those lectures which pleased only while they were new, and to become new again must be forgotten ? ” He then walked into the wood, and composed himself to his usual meditations ; when, before his thoughts had taken any settled form, he perceived his pursuer at his side, and was at first prompted by his impatience to go hastily away ; but, being unwilling to offend a man whom he had once reverenced and still loved, he invited him to sit down with him on the bank.

The old man, thus encouraged, began to lament the change which had been lately observed in the prince, and to inquire why he so often retired from the pleasures of the palace, to loneliness and silence. “ I fly from pleasure,” said the prince, “ because pleasure has ceased to please ; I am lonely because I am miserable, and am unwilling to cloud with my presence the happiness of others.” “ You, Sir,” said the sage, “ are the first who has complained of misery in the *happy valley*. I hope to convince you that your complaints have no real cause. You-

are here in full possession of all that the emperour of Abissinia can bestow ; here is neither labour to be endured nor danger to be dreaded, yet here is all that labour or danger can procure or purchase. Look round and tell me which of your wants is without supply : if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?"

" That I want nothing," said the prince, " or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint ; if I had any known want, I should have a certain wish ; that wish would excite endeavour, and I should not then repine to see the sun move so slowly towards the western mountain, or lament when the day breaks and sleep will no longer hide me from myself. When I see the kids and the lambs chasing one another, I fancy that I should be happy if I had something to pursue. But, possessing all that I can want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former. Let your experience inform me how the day may now seem as short as in my childhood, while nature was yet fresh, and every moment showed me what I never had observed before. I have already enjoyed too much ; give me something to desire."

The old man was surprised at this new species of affliction, and knew not what to reply, yet was unwilling to be silent. " Sir," said he, " if you had seen the miseries of the world, you would know how to value your present state." " Now," said the prince, " you have given me something to desire ; I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCE CONTINUES TO GRIEVE AND MUSE.

AT this time the sound of musick proclaimed the hour of repast, and the conversation was concluded. The old man went away sufficiently discontented, to find that his reasonings had produced the only conclusion which they were intended to prevent. But in the decline of life shame and grief are of short duration ; whether it be that we bear easily what we have borne long, or that, finding ourselves in age less regarded, we less regard others ; or, that we look with slight regard upon afflictions, to which we know that the hand of death is about to put an end.

The prince, whose views were extended to a wider space, could not speedily quiet his emotions. He had been before terrified at the length of life which nature promised him, because he considered that in a long time much must be endured ; he now rejoiced in his youth, because in many years much might be done.

This first beam of hope, that had been ever darted into his mind, rekindled youth in his cheeks, and doubled the lustre of his eyes. He was fired with the desire of doing something, though he knew not yet with distinctness, either end or means.

He was now no longer gloomy and unsocial ; but, considering himself as master of a secret stock of happiness, which he could enjoy only by concealing it, he affected to be busy in all schemes o

diversion, and endeavoured to make others pleased with the state of which he himself was weary. But pleasures never can be so multiplied or continued, as not to leave much of life unemployed ; there were many hours, both of the night and day, which he could spend without suspicion in solitary thought. The load of life was much lightened : he went eagerly into the assemblies, because he supposed the frequency of his presence necessary to the success of his purposes ; he retired gladly to privacy, because he had now a subject of thought.

His chief amusement was to picture to himself that world which he had never seen ; to place himself in various conditions ; to be entangled in imaginary difficulties, and to be engaged in wild adventures : but his benevolence always terminated his projects in the relief of distress, the detection of fraud, the defeat of oppression, and the diffusion of happiness.

Thus passed twenty months of the life of Rasselas. He busied himself so intensely in visionary bustle, that he forgot his real solitude, and, amidst hourly preparations for the various incidents of human affairs, neglected to consider by what means he should mingle with mankind.

One day, as he was sitting on a bank, he feigned to himself an orphan virgin robbed of her little portion by a treacherous lover, and crying after him for restitution and redress. So strongly was the image impressed upon his mind, that he started up in the maid's defence, and ran forward to seize the plunderer with all the eagerness of real pursuit. Fear naturally quickens the flight of guilt. Ras-

selas could not catch the fugitive with his utmost efforts ; but, resolving to weary by perseverance him whom he could not surpass in speed, he pressed on till the foot of the mountain stopped his course.

Here he recollected himself, and smiled at his own useless impetuosity. Then raising his eyes to the mountain, “ This,” said he, “ is the fatal obstacle that hinders at once the enjoyment of pleasure, and the exercise of virtue. How long is it that my hopes and wishes have flown beyond this boundary of my life, which yet I never have attempted to surmount !”

Struck with this reflection, he sat down to muse ; and remembered, that since he first resolved to escape from his confinement, the sun had passed twice over him in his annual course. He now felt a degree of regret with which he had never been before acquainted. He considered how much might have been done in the time which had passed ; and left nothing real behind it. He compared twenty months with the life of man. “ In life,” said he, “ is not to be counted the ignorance of infancy, or imbecility of age. We are long before we are able to think, and we soon cease from the power of acting. The true period of human existence may be reasonably estimated at forty years, of which I have mused away the four-and-twentieth part. What I have lost was certain, for I have certainly possessed it ; but of twenty months to come who can assure me ?”

The consciousness of his own folly pierced him deeply, and he was long before he could be reconciled to himself. “ The rest of my time,” said he,

" has been lost by the crime or folly of my ancestors, and the absurd institutions of my country ; I remember it with disgust, yet without remorse : but the months that have passed since new light darted into my soul, since I formed a scheme of reasonable felicity, have been squandered by my own fault. I have lost that which can never be restored : I have seen the sun rise and set for twenty months, an idle gazer on the light of heaven. In this time the birds have left the nest of their mother, and committed themselves to the woods and to the skies : the kid has forsaken the teat, and learned by degrees to climb the rocks in quest of independent sustenance. I only have made no advances, but am still helpless and ignorant. The moon, by more than twenty changes, admonished me of the flux of life ; the stream that rolled before my feet upbraided my inactivity. I sat feasting on intellectual luxury, regardless alike of the examples of the earth, and the instructions of the planets. Twenty months are passed ; who shall restore them?"

These sorrowful meditations fastened upon his mind ; he passed four months in resolving to lose no more time in idle resolves, and was awakened to more vigorous exertion, by hearing a maid, who had broken a porcelain cup, remark, that what cannot be repaired is not to be regretted.

This was obvious ; and Rasselas reproached himself that he had not discovered it, having not known, or not considered, how many useful hints are obtained by chance, and how often the mind, hurried by her own ardour to distant views, neglects the truths that lie open before her. He, for a few

hours, regretted his regret, and from that time bent his whole mind upon the means of escaping from the valley of happiness.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRINCE MEDITATES HIS ESCAPE.

HE now found that it would be very difficult to effect that which it was very easy to suppose effected. When he looked round about him, he saw himself confined by the bars of nature which had never yet been broken, and by the gate, through which none that once had passed it were ever able to return. He was now impatient as an eagle in a grate. He passed week after week in clambering the mountains, to see if there was any aperture which the bushes might conceal, but found all the summits inaccessible by their prominence. The iron gate he despaired to open ; for it was not only secured with all the power of art, but was always watched by successive sentinels, and was by its position exposed to the perpetual observation of all the inhabitants.

He then examined the cavern through which the waters of the lake were discharged ; and, looking down at a time when the sun shone strongly upon its mouth, he discovered it to be full of broken rocks, which, though they permitted the stream to flow through many narrow passages, would stop any body of solid bulk. He returned discouraged and dejected ; but, having now known the blessing of hope, resolved never to despair.

In these fruitless searches he spent ten months. The time, however, passed cheerfully away : in the morning he rose with new hope, in the evening applauded his own diligence, and in the night slept sound after his fatigue. He met a thousand amusements which beguiled his labour, and diversified his thoughts. . He discerned the various instincts of animals, and properties of plants, and found the place replete with wonders, of which he purposed to solace himself with the contemplation, if he should never be able to accomplish his flight ; rejoicing that his endeavours, though yet unsuccessful, had supplied him with a source of inexhaustible inquiry.

But his original curiosity was not yet abated ; he resolved to obtain some knowledge of the ways of men. His wish still continued, but his hope grew less. He ceased to survey any longer the walls of his prison, and spared to search by new toils for interstices which he knew could not be found, yet determined to keep his design always in view, and lay hold on any expedient that time should offer.

CHAPTER VI.

A DISSERTATION ON THE ART OF FLYING.

AMONG the artists that had been allured into the happy valley, to labour for the accommodation and pleasure of its inhabitants, was a man eminent for his knowledge of the mechanick powers, who had contrived many engines both of use and recreation. By a wheel, which the stream turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to all

the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavilion in the garden, around which he kept the air always cool by artificial showers. One of the groves, appropriated to the ladies, was ventilated by fans, to which the rivulet that ran through it gave a constant motion ; and instruments of soft musick were placed at proper distances, of which some played by the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.

This artist was sometimes visited by Rasselas, who was pleased with every kind of knowledge, imagining that the time would come when all his acquisitions should be of use to him in the open world. He came one day to amuse himself in his usual manner, and found the master busy in building a sailing chariot : he saw that the design was practicable upon a level surface, and with expressions of great esteem solicited its completion. The workman was pleased to find himself so much regarded by the prince, and resolved to gain yet higher honours. "Sir," said he, "you have seen but a small part of what the mechanick sciences can perform. I have been long of opinion, that instead of the tardy conveyance of ships and chariots, man might use the swifter migration of wings ; that the fields of air are open to knowledge, and that only ignorance and idleness need crawl upon the ground."

This hint rekindled the prince's desire of passing the mountains ; having seen what the mechanist had already performed, he was willing to fancy that he could do more ; yet resolved to inquire further, before he suffered hope to afflict him by disappointment. "I am afraid," said he to the artist, "that

your imagination prevails over your skill, and that you now tell me rather what you wish, than what you know. Every animal has his element assigned him ; the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth." " So," replied the mechanist, " fishes have the water, in which yet beasts can swim by nature, and men by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly : to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtler. We are only to proportion our power of resistance to the different density of matter through which we are to pass. You will be necessarily upborne by the air, if you can renew any impulse upon it, faster than the air can recede from the pressure."

" But the exercise of swimming," said the prince, " is very laborious ; the strongest limbs are soon wearied : I am afraid the act of flying will be yet more violent, and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim."

" The labour of rising from the ground," said the artist, " will be great, as we see it in the heavier domestick fowls, but as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished, till we shall arrive at a region where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall : no care will then be necessary but to move forwards, which the gentlest impulse will effect. You, Sir, whose curiosity is so extensive, will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by its diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel.

How must it amuse the pendent spectator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts! To survey with equal security the marts of trade, and the fields of battle; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty, and lulled by peace! How easily shall we then trace the Nile through all his passage; pass over to distant regions, and examine the face of nature from one extremity of the earth to the other!"

" All this," said the prince, " is much to be desired; but I am afraid that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquillity. I have been told, that respiration is difficult upon lofty mountains, yet from these precipices, though so high as to produce great tenuity of air, it is very easy to fall: therefore I suspect, that from any height, where life can be supported, there may be danger of too quick descent."

" Nothing," replied the artist, " will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome. If you will favour my project, I will try the first flight at my own hazard. I have considered the structure of all volant animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat's wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model I shall begin my task to-morrow, and in a year expect to tower into the air beyond the malice and pursuit of man. But I will work only on this condition, that the art shall not be divulged, and that you shall not require me to make wings for any but ourselves."

" Why," said Rasselas, " should you envy others so great an advantage? All skill ought to be exerted

for universal good ; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received."

"If men were all virtuous," returned the artist, "I should with great alacrity teach them all to fly. But what would be the security of the good, if the bad could at pleasure invade them from the sky? Against an army sailing through the clouds, neither walls, nor mountains, nor seas, could afford any security. A flight of northern savages might hover in the wind, and light at once with irresistible violence upon the capital of a fruitful region that was rolling under them. Even this valley, the retreat of princes, the abode of happiness, might be violated by the sudden descent of some of the naked nations that swarm on the coast of the southern sea."

The prince promised secrecy, and waited for the performance, not wholly hopeless of success. He visited the work from time to time, observed its progress, and remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength. The artist was every day more certain that he should leave vultures and eagles behind him, and the contagion of his confidence seized upon the prince.

In a year the wings were finished, and, on a morning appointed, the maker appeared furnished for flight on a little promontory : he waved his pinions a while to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and in an instant dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water, and the prince drew him to land, half dead with terror and vexation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCE FINDS A MAN OF LEARNING.

THE prince was not much afflicted by this disaster, having suffered himself to hope for a happier event, only because he had no other means of escape in view. He still persisted in his design to leave the happy valley by the first opportunity.

His imagination was now at a stand ; he had no prospect of entering into the world ; and, notwithstanding all his endeavours to support himself, discontent by degrees preyed upon him, and he began again to lose his thoughts in sadness, when the rainy season, which in these countries is periodical, made it inconvenient to wander in the woods.

The rain continu'd longer and with more violence than had been ever known : the clouds broke on the surrounding mountains, and the torrents streamed into the plain on every side, till the cavern was too narrow to discharge the water. The lake overflowed its banks, and all the level of the valley was covered with the inundation. The eminence, on which the palace was built, and some other spots of rising ground, were all that the eye could now discover. The herds and flocks left the pastures, and both the wild beasts and the tame retreated to the mountains.

This inundation confined all the princes to domestick amusements, and the attention of Rasselas

was particularly seized by a poem, which Imlac rehearsed, upon the various conditions of humanity. He commanded the poet to attend him in his apartment, and recite his verses a second time; then entering into familiar talk, he thought himself happy in having found a man who knew the world so well, and could so skilfully paint the scenes of life. He asked a thousand questions about things, to which, though common to all other mortals, his confinement from childhood had kept him a stranger. The poet pitied his ignorance, and loved his curiosity, and entertained him from day to day with novelty and instruction, so that the prince regretted the necessity of sleep, and longed till the morning should renew his pleasure.

As they were sitting together, the prince commanded Imlac to relate his history, and to tell by what accident he was forced, or by what motive induced, to close his life in the happy valley. As he was going to begin his narrative, Rasselas was called to a concert, and obliged to restrain his curiosity till the evening.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HISTORY OF IMLAC.

THE close of the day is, in the regions of the torrid zone, the only season of diversion and entertainment, and it was therefore midnight before the music ceased, and the princesses retired. Rasselas then called for his companion, and required him to begin the story of his life.

“ Sir,” said Imlac, “ my history will not be long : the life that is devoted to knowledge passes silently away, and is very little diversified by events. To talk in publick, to think in solitude, to read and to hear, to inquire, and answer inquiries, is the business of a scholar. He wanders about the world without pomp or terror, and is neither known nor valued but by men like himself.

“ I was born in the kingdom of Goiama, at no great distance from the fountain of the Nile. My father was a wealthy merchant, who traded between the inland countries of Africk and the ports of the Red Sea. He was honest, frugal, and diligent, but of mean sentiments, and narrow comprehension : he desired only to be rich, and to conceal his riches, lest he should be spoiled by the governors of the province.”

“ Surely,” said the prince, “ my father must be negligent of his charge, if any man in his dominions dares take that which belongs to another. Does he not know that kings are accountable for injustice permitted as well as done ? If I were emperour, not the meanest of my subjects should be oppressed with impunity. My blood boils when I am told that a merchant durst not enjoy his honest gains for fear of losing them by the rapacity of power. Name the governour who robbed the people, that I may declare his crimes to the emperour.”

“ Sir,” said Imlac, “ your ardour is the natural effect of virtue animated by youth : the time will come when you will acquit your father, and perhaps hear with less impatience of the governour.

Oppression is, in the Abissinian dominions, neither frequent nor tolerated; but no form of government has been yet discovered, by which cruelty can be wholly prevented. Subordination supposes power on one part, and subjection on the other; and if power be in the hands of men, it will sometimes be abused. The vigilance of the supreme magistrate may do much, but much will still remain undone. He can never know all the crimes that are committed, and can seldom punish all that he knows."

"This," said the prince, "I do not understand; but I had rather hear thee than dispute. Continue thy narration."

"My father," proceeded Imlac, "originally intended that I should have no other education than such as might qualify me for commerce; and discovering in me great strength of memory, and quickness of apprehension, often declared his hope that I should be some time the richest man in Abissinia."

"Why," said the prince, "did thy father desire the increase of his wealth, when it was already greater than he durst discover or enjoy? I am unwilling to doubt thy veracity, yet inconsistencies cannot both be true."

"Inconsistencies," answered Imlac, "cannot both be right, but, imputed to man, they may both be true. Yet diversity is not inconsistency. My father might expect a time of greater security. However, some desire is necessary to keep life in motion, and he, whose real wants are supplied, must admit those of fancy."

“ This,” said the prince, “ I can in some measure conceive. I repent that I interrupted thee.”

“ With this hope,” proceeded Imlac, “ he sent me to school ; but when I had once found the delight of knowledge, and felt the pleasure of intelligence and the pride of invention, I began silently to despise riches, and determined to disappoint the purpose of my father, whose grossness of conception raised my pity. I was twenty years old before his tenderness would expose me to the fatigue of travel, in which time I had been instructed, by successive masters, in all the literature of my native country. As every hour taught me something new, I lived in a continual course of gratifications ; but, as I advanced towards manhood, I lost much of the reverence with which I had been used to look on my instructors ; because, when the lesson was ended, I did not find them wiser or better than common men.

“ At length my father resolved to initiate me in commerce, and opening one of his subterranean treasuries, counted out ten thousand pieces of gold. This, young man, said he, is the stock with which you must negotiate. I began with less than the fifth part, and you see how diligence and parsimony have increased it. This is your own to waste or to improve. If you squander it by negligence or caprice, you must wait for my death before you will be rich : if, in four years, you double your stock, we will thenceforward let subordination cease, and live together as friends and partners ; for he shall always be equal with me, who is equally skilled in the art of growing rich.

“ We laid our money upon camels, concealed in bales of cheap goods, and travelled to the shore of the Red Sea. When I cast my eye on the expanse of waters, my heart bounded like that of a prisoner escaped. I felt an unextinguishable curiosity kindle in my mind, and resolved to snatch this opportunity of seeing the manners of other nations, and of learning sciences unknown in Abissinia.

“ I remembered that my father had obliged me to the improvement of my stock, not by a promise which I ought not to violate, but by a penalty which I was at liberty to incur; and therefore determined to gratify my predominant desire, and, by drinking at the fountains of knowledge, to quench the thirst of curiosity.

“ As I was supposed to trade without connexion with my father, it was easy for me to become acquainted with the master of a ship, and procure a passage to some other country. I had no motives of choice to regulate my voyage; it was sufficient for me that, wherever I wandered, I should see a country which I had not seen before. I therefore entered a ship bound for Surat, having left a letter for my father declaring my intention.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HISTORY OF IMLAC CONTINUED.

“ WHEN I first entered upon the world of waters, and lost sight of land, I looked round about me with pleasing terror, and thinking my soul enlarged by the boundless prospect, imagined

that I could gaze round for ever without satiety ; but, in a short time, I grew weary of looking on barren uniformity, where I could only see again what I had already seen. I then descended into the ship, and doubted for a while whether all my future pleasures would not end like this, in disgust and disappointment. Yet, surely, said I, the ocean and the land are very different ; the only variety of water is rest and motion, but the earth has mountains and valleys, deserts and cities : it is inhabited by men of different customs and contrary opinions ; and I may hope to find variety in life, though I should miss it in nature.

“ With this thought I quieted my mind, and amused myself during the voyage, sometimes by learning from the sailors the art of navigation, which I have never practised, and sometimes by forming schemes for my conduct in different situations, in not one of which I have been ever placed.

“ I was almost weary of my naval amusements when we landed safely at Surat. I secured my money, and purchasing some commodities for show, joined myself to a caravan that was passing into the inland country. My companions, for some reason or other, conjecturing that I was rich, and, by my inquiries and admiration, finding that I was ignorant, considered me as a novice whom they had a right to cheat, and who was to learn at the usual expense the art of fraud. They exposed me to the theft of servants, and the exaction of officers, and saw me plundered upon false pretences, without any advantage to themselves, but

that of rejoicing in the superiority of their own knowledge."

"Stop a moment," said the prince. "Is there such depravity in man, as that he should injure another without benefit to himself? I can easily conceive that all are pleased with superiority; but your ignorance was merely accidental, which being neither your crime nor your folly, could afford them no reason to applaud themselves; and the knowledge which they had, and which you wanted, they might as effectually have shown by warning, as betraying you."

"Pride," said Imlac, "is seldom delicate, it will please itself with very mean advantages; and envy feels not its own happiness, but when it may be compared with the misery of others. They were my enemies, because they grieved to think me rich; and my oppressors, because they delighted to find me weak."

"Proceed," said the prince: "I doubt not of the facts which you relate, but imagine that you impute them to mistaken motives."

"In this company," said Imlac, "I arrived at Agra, the capital of Indostan, the city in which the Great Mogul commonly resides. I applied myself to the language of the country, and in a few months was able to converse with the learned men; some of whom I found morose and reserved, and others easy and communicative; some were unwilling to teach another what they had with difficulty learned themselves; and some showed that the end of their studies was to gain the dignity of instructing.

“ To the tutor of the young princes I recommended myself so much, that I was presented to the emperor as a man of uncommon knowledge. The emperor asked me many questions concerning my country and my travels; and though I cannot now recollect any thing that he uttered above the power of a common man, he dismissed me astonished at his wisdom, and enamoured of his goodness.

“ My credit was now so high, that the merchants, with whom I had travelled, applied to me for recommendations to the ladies of the Court. I was surprised at their confidence of solicitation, and gently reproached them with their practices on the road. They heard me with cold indifference, and showed no tokens of shame or sorrow.

“ They then urged their request with the offer of a bribe; but what I would not do for kindness, I would not do for money; and refused them, not because they had injured me, but because I would not enable them to injure others; for I knew they would have made use of my credit to cheat those who should buy their wares.

“ Having resided at Agra till there was no more to be learned, I travelled into Persia, where I saw many remains of ancient magnificence, and observed many new accommodations of life. The Persians are a nation eminently social, and their assemblies afforded me daily opportunities of remarking characters and manners, and of tracing human nature through all its variations.

“ From Persia I passed into Arabia, where I saw a nation at once pastoral and warlike; who live

without any settled habitation; whose only wealth is their flocks and herds; and who have yet carried on, through all ages, an hereditary war with all mankind, though they neither covet nor envy their possessions.

CHAPTER X.

IMLAC'S HISTORY CONTINUED. A DISSERTATION UPON POETRY.

“ WHEREVER I went, I found that poetry was considered as the highest learning, and regarded with a veneration somewhat approaching to that which man would pay to the angelick nature. And yet it fills me with wonder, that, in almost all countries, the most ancient poets are considered as the best: whether it be that every other kind of knowledge is an acquisition gradually attained; and poetry is a gift conferred at once; or that the first poetry of every nation surprised them as a novelty, and retained the credit by consent which it received by accident at first: or whether, as the province of poetry is to describe Nature and Passion, which are always the same, the first writers took possession of the most striking objects for description, and the most probable occurrences for fiction, and left nothing to those that followed them, but transcription of the same events, and new combinations of the same images. Whatever be the reason, it is commonly observed that the early writers are in possession of nature, and their followers of art: that the first excel in strength and

invention, and the latter in elegance and refinement.

“I was desirous to add my name to this illustrious fraternity. I read all the poets of Persia and Arabia, and was able to repeat by memory the volumes that are suspended in the mosque of Mecca. But I soon found that no man was ever great by imitation. My desire of excellence impelled me to transfer my attention to nature and to life. Nature was to be my subject, and men to be my auditors: I could never describe what I had not seen: I could not hope to move those with delight or terror, whose interests and opinions I did not understand.

“Being now resolved to be a poet, I saw every thing with a new purpose; my sphere of attention was suddenly magnified: no kind of knowledge was to be overlooked. I ranged mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and pictured upon my mind every tree of the forest and flower of the valley. I observed with equal care the crags of the rock and the pinnacles of the palace. Sometimes I wandered along the mazes of the rivulet, and sometimes watched the changes of the summer clouds. To a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination: he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, and meteors of the sky, must all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety: for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth; and he, who

knows most, will have most power of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions and unexpected instruction.

“ All the appearances of nature I was therefore careful to study, and every country which I have surveyed has contributed something to my poetical powers.”

“ In so wide a survey,” said the prince, “ you must surely have left much unobserved. I have lived, till now, within the circuit of these mountains, and yet cannot walk abroad without the sight of something which I had never beheld before, or never heeded.”

“ The business of a poet,” said Imlac, “ is to examine, not the individual, but the species ; to remark general properties and large appearances ; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind ; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristicks which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.

“ But the knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet ; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition ; observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the de-

spondence of decrepitude. He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age or country ; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state ; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same : he must, therefore, content himself with the slow progress of his name ; condemn the applause of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations ; as a being superior to time and place.

“ His labour is not yet at an end : he must know many languages and many sciences ; and, that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must, by incessant practice, familiarize to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony.”

CHAPTER XI.

IMLAC'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED. A HINT ON PILGRIMAGE.

IMLAC now felt the enthusiastick fit, and was proceeding to aggrandize his own profession, when the prince cried out, “ Enough ! thou hast convinced me, that no human being can ever be a poet. Proceed with thy narration.”

“ To be a poet,” said Imlac, “ is indeed very difficult.” “ So difficult,” returned the prince, “ that I will at present hear no more of his labours. Tell me whither you went when you had seen Persia.”

“ From Persia,” said the poet, “ I travelled through Syria, and for three years resided in Palestine, where I conversed with great numbers of the northern and western nations of Europe ; the nations which are now in possession of all power and all knowledge ; whose armies are irresistible, and whose fleets command the remotest parts of the globe. When I compared these men with the natives of our own kingdom, and those that surround us, they appeared almost another order of beings. In their countries it is difficult to wish for any thing that may not be obtained : a thousand arts, of which we never heard, are continually labouring for their convenience and pleasure ; and whatever their own climate has denied them is supplied by their commerce.”

“ By what means,” said the prince, “ are the Europeans thus powerful, or why, since they can so easily visit Asia and Africa for trade or conquest, cannot the Asiatics and Africans invade their coasts, plant colonies in their ports, and give laws to their natural princes ? The same wind that carries them back would bring us thither.”

“ They are more powerful, sir, than we,” answered Inlac, “ because they are wiser ; knowledge will always predominate over ignorance, as man governs the other animals. But why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reason can be given, but the unsearchable will of the Supreme Being.”

“ When,” said the prince with a sigh, “ shall I be able to visit Palestine, and mingle with this mighty confluence of nations ? Till that happy mo-

ment shall arrive, let me fill up the time with such representations as thou canst give me. I am not ignorant of the motive that assembles such numbers in that place, and cannot but consider it as the centre of wisdom and piety, to which the best and wisest men of every land must be continually resorting."

"There are some nations," said Imlac, "that send few visitants to Palestine; for many numerous and learned sects in Europe concur to censure pilgrimage as superstitious, or deride it as ridiculous."

"You know," said the prince, "how little my life has made me acquainted with diversity of opinions: it will be too long to hear the arguments on both sides; you, that have considered them, tell me the result."

"Pilgrimage," said Imlac, "like many other acts of piety, may be reasonable or superstitious, according to the principles upon which it is performed. Long journeys in search of truth are not commanded. Truth, such as is necessary to the regulation of life, is always found where it is honestly sought. Change of place is no natural cause of the increase of piety, for it inevitably produces dissipation of mind. Yet, since men go every day to view the fields where great actions have been performed, and return with stronger impressions of the event, curiosity of the same kind may naturally dispose us to view that country whence our religion had its beginning; and I believe no man surveys those awful scenes without some confirmation of holy resolutions. That the Supreme Being may be more easily propitiated in one place than in another, is

the dream of idle superstition ; but that some places may operate upon our own minds in an uncommon manner, is an opinion which hourly experience will justify. He who supposes that his vices may be more successfully combated in Palestine, will, perhaps, find himself mistaken, yet he may go thither without folly : he who thinks they will be more freely pardoned, dishonours at once his reason and religion."

" These," said the prince, " are European distinctions. I will consider them another time. What have you found to be the effect of knowledge? Are those nations happier than we?"

" There is so much infelicity," said the poet, " in the world, that scarce any man has leisure from his own distresses to estimate the comparative happiness of others. Knowledge is certainly one of the means of pleasure, as is confessed by the natural desire which every mind feels of increasing its ideas. Ignorance is mere privation, by which nothing can be produced : it is a vacuity in which the soul sits motionless and torpid for want of attraction ; and, without knowing why, we always rejoice when we learn, and grieve when we forget. I am, therefore, inclined to conclude, that if nothing counteracts the natural consequence of learning, we grow more happy as our minds take a wider range.

" In enumerating the particular comforts of life we shall find many advantages on the side of the Europeans. They cure wounds and diseases with which we languish and perish. We suffer inclemencies of weather which they can obviate. They have engines for the despatch of many laborious

works, which we must perform by manual industry. There is such communication between distant places, that one friend can hardly be said to be absent from another. Their policy removes all publick inconveniencies : they have roads cut through their mountains, and bridges laid upon their rivers. And, if we descend to the privacies of life, their habitations are more commodious, and their possessions are more secure.”

“ They are surely happy,” said the prince, “ who have all these conveniencies, of which I envy none so much as the facility with which separated friends interchange their thoughts.”

“ The Europeans,” answered Imlac, “ are less unhappy than we, but they are not happy. Human life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORY OF IMLAC CONTINUED.

“ I AM not yet willing,” said the prince, “ to suppose that happiness is so parsimoniously distributed to mortals ; nor can believe but that, if I had the choice of life, I should be able to fill every day with pleasure. I would injure no man, and should provoke no resentment : I would relieve every distress, and should enjoy the benedictions of gratitude. I would choose my friends among the wise, and my wife among the virtuous ; and therefore should be in no danger from treachery or unkindness. My children should, by my care, be learned and pious,

and would repay to my age what their childhood had received. What would dare to molest him who might call on every side to thousands enriched by his bounty, or assisted by his power? And why should not life glide quietly away in the soft reciprocation of protection and reverence? All this may be done without the help of European refinements, which appear by their effects to be rather specious than useful. Let us leave them, and pursue our journey."

" From Palestine," said Imlac, " I passed through many regions of Asia; in the more civilized kingdoms as a trader, and among the barbarians of the mountains as a pilgrim. At last I began to long for my native country, that I might repose after my travels and fatigues, in the places where I had spent my earliest years, and gladden my old companions with the recital of my adventures. Often did I figure to myself those with whom I had sported away the gay hours of dawning life, sitting round me in its evening, wondering at my tales, and listening to my counsels.

" When this thought had taken possession of my mind, I considered every moment as wasted which did not bring me nearer to Abissinia. I hastened into Egypt, and, notwithstanding my impatience, was detained ten months in the contemplation of its ancient magnificence, and in inquiries after the remains of its ancient learning. I found in Cairo a mixture of all nations; some brought thither by the love of knowledge, some by the hope of gain, and many by the desire of living after their own manner without observation, and of lying hid in the obscu-

rity of multitudes : for in a city, populous as Cairo, it is possible to obtain at the same time the gratifications of society, and the secrecy of solitude.

“ From Cairo I travelled to Suez, and embarked on the Red Sea, passing along the coast till I arrived at the port from which I had departed twenty years before. Here I joined myself to a caravan, and re-entered my native country.

“ I now expected the caresses of my kinsmen, and the congratulations of my friends, and was not without hope that my father, whatever value he had set upon riches, would own with gladness and pride a son who was able to add to the felicity and honour of the nation. But I was soon convinced that my thoughts were vain. My father had been dead fourteen years, having divided his wealth among my brothers, who were removed to some other provinces. Of my companions the greater part was in the grave ; of the rest, some could with difficulty remember me, and some considered me as one corrupted by foreign manners.

“ A man used to vicissitudes is not easily dejected. I forgot, after a time, my disappointment, and endeavoured to recommend myself to the nobles of the kingdom ; they admitted me to their tables, heard my story, and dismissed me. I opened a school, and was prohibited to teach. I then resolved to sit down in the quiet of domestick life, and addressed a lady that was fond of my conversation, but rejected my suit, because my father was a merchant.

“ Wearyed at last with solicitation and repulses, I resolved to hide myself for ever from the world, and depend no longer on the opinion or caprice of

others. I waited for the time when the gate of the *happy valley* should open, that I might bid farewell to hope and fear: the day came; my performance was distinguished with favour, and I resigned myself with joy to perpetual confinement."

"Hast thou here found happiness at last?" said Rasselas. "Tell me without reserve; art thou content with thy condition? or, dost thou wish to be again wandering and inquiring? All the inhabitants of this valley celebrate their lot, and, at the annual visit of the emperour, invite others to partake of their felicity."

"Great prince," said Imlac, "I shall speak the truth; I know not one of all your attendants who does not lament the hour when he entered this retreat. I am less unhappy than the rest, because I have a mind replete with images, which I can vary and combine at pleasure. I can amuse my solitude by the renovation of the knowledge which begins to fade from my memory, and by recollection of the accidents of my past life. Yet all this ends in the sorrowful consideration, that my acquirements are now useless, and that none of my pleasures can be again enjoyed. The rest, whose minds have no impression but of the present moment, are either corroded by malignant passions, or sit stupid in the gloom of perpetual vacancy."

"What passions can infest those," said the prince, "who have no rivals? We are in a place where impotence precludes malice, and where all envy is repressed by community of enjoyments."

"There may be community," said Imlac, "of material possessions, but there can never be com-

munity of love or of esteem. It must happen that one will please more than another; he that knows himself despised will always be envious; and still more envious and malevolent, if he is condemned to live in the presence of those who despise him. The invitations, by which they allure others to a state which they feel to be wretched, proceed from the natural malignity of hopeless misery. They are weary of themselves, and of each other, and expect to find relief in new companions. They envy the liberty which their folly has forfeited, and would gladly see all mankind imprisoned like themselves.

“ From this crime, however, I am wholly free. No man can say, that he is wretched by my persuasion. I look with pity on the crowds who are annually soliciting admission to captivity, and wish that it were lawful for me to warn them of their danger.”

“ My dear Imlac,” said the prince, “ I will open to thee my whole heart. I have long meditated an escape from the happy valley. I have examined the mountains on every side, but find myself insuperably barred: teach me the way to break my prison; thou shalt be the companion of my flight, the guide of my rambles, the partner of my fortune, and my sole director in the *choice of life.*”

“ Sir,” answered the poet, “ your escape will be difficult, and, perhaps, you may soon repent your curiosity. The world, which you figure to yourself smooth and quiet as the lake in the valley, you will find a sea foaming with tempests, and boiling with whirlpools: you will be sometimes overwhelmed by the waves of violence, and sometimes dashed against

the rocks of treachery. Amidst wrongs and frauds, competitions and anxieties, you will wish a thousand times for these seats of quiet, and willingly quit hope to be free from fear."

" Do not seek to deter me from my purpose," said the prince: " I am impatient to see what thou hast seen; and, since thou art thyself weary of the valley, it is evident that thy former state was better than this. Whatever be the consequence of my experiment, I am resolved to judge with mine own eyes of the various conditions of men, and then to make deliberately my *choice of life*."

" I am afraid," said Imlac, " you are hindered by stronger restraints than my persuasions; yet, if your determination is fixed, I do not counsel you to despair. Few things are impossible to diligence and skill."

CHAPTER XIII.

RASSELAS DISCOVERS THE MEANS OF ESCAPE.

THE prince now dismissed his favourite to rest, but the narrative of wonders and novelties filled his mind with perturbation. He revolved all that he had heard, and prepared innumerable questions for the morning.

Much of his uneasiness was now removed. He had a friend to whom he could impart his thoughts, and whose experience could assist him in his designs. His heart was no longer condemned to swell with silent vexation. He thought that even the *happy valley* might be endured with such a companion,

and that if they could range the world together, he should have nothing further to desire.

In a few days the water was discharged, and the ground dried. The prince and Imlac then walked out together to converse without the notice of the rest. The prince, whose thoughts were always on the wing, as he passed by the gate, said, with a countenance of sorrow, “Why art thou so strong, and why is man so weak?”

“Man is not weak,” answered his companion; “knowledge is more than equivalent to force. The master of mechanicks laughs at strength. I can burst the gate, but cannot do it secretly. Some other expedient must be tried.”

As they were walking on the side of the mountain, they observed that the conies, which the rain had driven from their burrows, had taken shelter among the bushes, and formed holes behind them, tending upwards in an oblique line. “It has been the opinion of antiquity,” said Imlac, “that human reason borrowed many arts from the instinct of animals; let us, therefore, not think ourselves degraded by learning from the cony. We may escape by piercing the mountain in the same direction. We will begin where the summit hangs over the middle part, and labour upward till we shall issue up beyond the prominence.”

The eyes of the prince, when he heard this proposal, sparkled with joy. The execution was easy, and the success certain.

No time was now lost. They hastened early in the morning to choose a place proper for their mine. They clambered with great fatigue among

crags and brambles, and returned without having discovered any part that favoured their design. The second and the third day were spent in the same manner, and with the same frustration. But, on the fourth, they found a small cavern, concealed by a thicket, where they resolved to make their experiment.

Imlac procured instruments proper to hew stone and remove earth, and they fell to their work on the next day with more eagerness than vigour. They were presently exhausted by their efforts, and sat down to pant upon the grass. The prince, for a moment, appeared to be discouraged. "Sir," said his companion, "practice will enable us to continue our labour for a longer time; mark, however, how far we have advanced, and you will find that our toil will some time have an end. Great works are performed, not by strength, but perseverance: yonder palace was raised by single stones, yet you see its height and spaciousness. He that shall walk with vigour three hours a day, will pass in seven years a space equal to the circumference of the globe."

They returned to their work day after day, and, in a short time, found a fissure in the rock, which enabled them to pass far with very little obstruction. This Rasselias considered as a good omen. "Do not disturb your mind," said Imlac, "with other hopes or fears than reason may suggest: if you are pleased with prognosticks of good, you will be terrified likewise with tokens of evil, and your whole life will be a prey to superstition. Whatever facilitates our work is more than an omen, it is a cause of success. This is one of those pleasing surprises which often

happen to active resolution. Many things difficult to design prove easy to performance."

CHAPTER XIV.

RASSELAS AND IMLAC RECEIVE AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

THEY had now wrought their way to the middle, and solaced their toil with the approach of liberty, when the prince, coming down to refresh himself with air, found his sister Nekayah standing before the mouth of the cavity. He started and stood confused, afraid to tell his design, and yet hopeless to conceal it. A few moments determined him to repose on her fidelity, and secure her secrecy by a declaration without reserve.

"Do not imagine," said the princess, "that I came hither as a spy: I had long observed from my window, that you and Imlac directed your walk every day towards the same point, but I did not suppose you had any better reason for the preference than a cooler shade, or more fragrant bank; nor followed you with any other design than to partake of your conversation. Since then not suspicion but fondness has detected you, let me not lose the advantage of my discovery. I am equally weary of confinement with yourself, and not less desirous of knowing what is done or suffered in the world. Permit me to fly with you from this tasteless tranquillity, which will yet grow more loathsome when you have left me. You may deny me to accompany you, but cannot hinder me from following."

The prince, who loved Nekayah above his other

sisters, had no inclination to refuse her request, and grieved that he had lost an opportunity of showing his confidence by a voluntary communication. It was therefore agreed that she should leave the valley with them; and that, in the mean time, she should watch, lest any other straggler should, by chance or curiosity, follow them to the mountain.

At length their labour was at an end; they saw light beyond the prominence, and, issuing to the top of the mountain, beheld the Nile, yet a narrow current, wandering beneath them.

The prince looked round with rapture, anticipated all the pleasures of travel, and in thought was already transported beyond his father's dominions. Imlac, though very joyful at his escape, had less expectation of pleasure in the world, which he had before tried, and of which he had been weary.

Rasselas was so much delighted with a wider horizon, that he could not soon be persuaded to return into the valley. He informed his sister that the way was open, and that nothing now remained but to prepare for their departure.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS LEAVE THE VALLEY, AND SEE MANY WONDERS.

THE prince and princess had jewels sufficient to make them rich whenever they came into a place of commerce, which, by Imlac's direction, they hid in their clothes, and, on the night of the next full moon, all left the valley. The princess was

followed only by a single favourite, who did not know whither she was going.

They clambered through the cavity, and began to go down on the other side. The princess and her maid turned their eyes towards every part, and, seeing nothing to bound their prospect, considered themselves as in danger of being lost in a dreary vacuity. They stopped and trembled. “ I am almost afraid,” said the princess, “ to begin a journey of which I cannot perceive an end, and to venture into this immense plain, where I may be approached on every side by men whom I never saw.” The prince felt nearly the same emotions, though he thought it more manly to conceal them.

Imlac smiled at their terrors, and encouraged them to proceed; but the princess continued irresolute till she had been imperceptibly drawn forward too far to return.

In the morning they found some shepherds in the field, who set milk and fruits before them. The princess wondered that she did not see a palace ready for her reception, and a table spread with delicacies; but, being faint and hungry, she drank the milk and eat the fruits, and thought them of a higher flavour than the products of the valley.

They travelled forward by easy journeys, being all unaccustomed to toil or difficulty, and knowing, that though they might be missed, they could not be pursued. In a few days they came into a more populous region, where Imlac was diverted with the admiration which his companions expressed at the diversity of manners, stations, and employments.

Their dress was such as might not bring upon

them the suspicion of having any thing to conceal, yet the prince, wherever he came, expected to be obeyed, and the princess was frightened, because those that came into her presence did not prostrate themselves before her. Imlac was forced to observe them with great vigilance, lest they should betray their rank by their unusual behaviour, and detained them several weeks in the first village, to accustom them to the sight of common mortals.

By degrees the royal wanderers were taught to understand that they had for a time laid aside their dignity, and were to expect only such regard as liberality and courtesy could procure. And Imlac having, by many admonitions, prepared them to endure the tumults of a port, and the ruggedness of the commercial race, brought them down to the sea-coast.

The prince and his sister, to whom every thing was new, were gratified equally at all places, and therefore remained for some months at the port without any inclination to pass further. Imlac was content with their stay, because he did not think it safe to expose them, unpractised in the world, to the hazards of a foreign country.

At last he began to fear lest they should be discovered, and proposed to fix a day for their departure. They had no pretensions to judge for themselves, and referred the whole scheme to his direction. He therefore took passage in a ship to Suez; and, when the time came, with great difficulty prevailed on the princess to enter the vessel. They had a quick and prosperous voyage, and from Suez travelled by land to Cairo.

CHAPTER XVI.

THEY ENTER CAIRO, AND FIND EVERY MAN HAPPY.

As they approached the city, which filled the strangers with astonishment, “ This,” said Imlac to the prince, “ is the place where travellers and merchants assemble from all the corners of the earth. You will here find men of every character, and every occupation. Commerce is here honourable: I will act as a merchant, and you shall live as strangers, who have no other end of travel than curiosity; it will soon be observed that we are rich; our reputation will procure us access to all whom we shall desire to know; you will see all the conditions of humanity, and enable yourself at leisure to make your *choice of life*.

They now entered the town, stunned by the noise, and offended by the crowds. Instruction had not yet so prevailed over habit, but that they wondered to see themselves pass undistinguished along the street, and met by the lowest of the people without reverence or notice. The princess could not at first bear the thought of being levelled with the vulgar, and, for some days, continued in her chamber, where she was served by her favourite Pekuah as in the palace of the valley.

Imlac, who understood traffick, sold part of the jewels the next day, and hired a house, which he adorned with such magnificence, that he was immediately considered as a merchant of great wealth. His politeness attracted many acquaintance, and his generosity made him courted by many dependents.

His table was crowded by men of every nation, who all admired his knowledge, and solicited his favour. His companions, not being able to mix in the conversation, could make no discovery of their ignorance or surprise, and were gradually initiated in the world as they gained knowledge of the language.

The prince had, by frequent lectures, been taught the use and nature of money ; but the ladies could not, for a long time, comprehend what the merchants did with small pieces of gold and silver, or why things of so little use should be received as equivalent to the necessaries of life.

They studied the language two years, while Imlac was preparing to set before them the various ranks and conditions of mankind. He grew acquainted with all who had any thing uncommon in their fortune or conduct. He frequented the voluptuous and the frugal, the idle and the busy, the merchants and the men of learning.

The prince being now able to converse with fluency, and having learned the caution necessary to be observed in his intercourse with strangers, began to accompany Imlac to places of resort, and to enter into all assemblies, that he might make his *choice of life*.

For some time he thought choice needless, because all appeared to him equally happy. Wherever he went he met gaiety and kindness, and heard the song of joy or the laugh of carelessness. He began to believe that the world overflowed with universal plenty, and that nothing was withheld either from want or merit ; that every hand showered

liberality, and every heart melted with benevolence ; “ and who then,” says he, “ will be suffered to be wretched ? ”

Imlac permitted the pleasing delusion, and was unwilling to crush the hope of inexperience, till one day, having sat a while silent, “ I know not,” said the prince, “ what can be the reason that I am more unhappy than any of our friends. I see them perpetually and unalterably cheerful, but feel my own mind restless and uneasy. I am unsatisfied with those pleasures which I seem most to court ; I live in the crowds of jollity, not so much to enjoy company as to shun myself, and am only loud and merry to conceal my sadness.”

“ Every man,” said Imlac, “ may, by examining his own mind, guess what passes in the minds of others : when you feel that your own gaiety is counterfeit, it may justly lead you to suspect that of your companions not to be sincere. Envy is commonly reciprocal. We are long before we are convinced that happiness is never to be found, and each believes it possessed by others, to keep alive the hope of obtaining it for himself. In the assembly, where you passed the last night, there appeared such sprightliness of air, and volatility of fancy, as might have suited beings of a higher order, formed to inhabit serener regions, inaccessible to care or sorrow : yet, believe me, prince, there was not one who did not dread the moment when solitude should deliver him to the tyranny of reflection.”

“ This,” said the prince, “ may be true of others, since it is true of me ; yet, whatever be the general infelicity of man, one condition is more happy than

another, and wisdom surely directs us to take the least evil in the *choice of life.*”

“ The causes of good and evil,” answered Imlac, “ are so various and uncertain, so often entangled with each other, so diversified by various relations, and so much subject to accidents which cannot be foreseen, that he who would fix his condition upon incontestable reasons of preference, must live and die inquiring and deliberating.”

“ But surely,” said Rasselas, “ the wise men, to whom we listen with reverence and wonder, chose that mode of life for themselves which they thought most likely to make them happy.”

“ Very few,” said the poet, “ live by choice. Every man is placed in his present condition by causes which acted without his foresight, and with which he did not always willingly co-operate; and therefore you will rarely meet one who does not think the lot of his neighbour better than his own.”

“ I am pleased to think,” said the prince, “ that my birth has given me at least one advantage over others, by enabling me to determine for myself. I have here the world before me; I will review it at leisure: surely happiness is somewhere to be found.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRINCE ASSOCIATES WITH YOUNG MEN OF SPIRIT AND GAIETY.

RASSELAS rose next day, and resolved to begin his experiments upon life. “ Youth,” cried he, “ is the time of gladness: I will join myself to the young men, whose only business is to gratify their

desires, and whose time is all spent in a succession of enjoyments."

To such societies he was readily admitted, but a few days brought him back weary and disgusted. Their mirth was without images ; their laughter without motive ; their pleasures were gross and sensual, in which the mind had no part ; their conduct was at once wild and mean ; they laughed at order and at law, but the frown of power dejected, and the eye of wisdom abashed them.

The prince soon concluded, that he should never be happy in a course of life of which he was ashamed. He thought it unsuitable to a reasonable being to act without a plan, and to be sad or cheerful only by chance. "Happiness," said he, "must be something solid and permanent, without fear and without uncertainty."

But his young companions had gained so much of his regard by their frankness and courtesy, that he could not leave them without warning and remonstrance. "My friends," said he, "I have seriously considered our manners and our prospects, and find that we have mistaken our own interest. The first years of man must make provision for the last. He that never thinks never can be wise. Perpetual levity must end in ignorance ; and intemperance, though it may fire the spirits for an hour, will make life short or miserable. Let us consider that youth is of no long duration, and that in maturer age, when the enchantments of fancy shall cease, and phantoms of delight dance no more about us, we shall have no comforts but the esteem of wise men, and the means of doing good. Let us,

therefore, stop, while to stop is in our power : let us live as men who are some time to grow old, and to whom it will be the most dreadful of all evils to count their past years by follies, and to be reminded of their former luxuriance of health only by the maladies which riot has produced."

They stared a while in silence one upon another, and at last drove him away by a general chorus of continued laughter.

The consciousness that his sentiments were just, and his intentions kind, was scarcely sufficient to support him against the horror of derision. But he recovered his tranquillity, and pursued his search.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRINCE FINDS A WISE AND HAPPY MAN.

As he was one day walking in the street, he saw a spacious building which all were, by the open doors, invited to enter : he followed the stream of people, and found it a hall or school of declamation, in which professors read lectures to their auditory. He fixed his eye upon a sage raised above the rest, who discoursed with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He showed, with great strength of sentiment, and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher ; that when fancy, the parent of passion, usurps the dominion

of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation, and confusion ; that she betrays the fortresses of the intellect to rebels, and excites her children to sedition against reason, their lawful sovereign. He compared reason to the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform, and lasting ; and fancy to a meteor, of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion, and delusive in its direction.

He then communicated the various precepts given from time to time for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope ; is no more emaciated by envy, inflamed by anger, emasculated by tenderness, or depressed by grief ; but walks on calmly through the tumults or privacies of life, as the sun pursues alike his course through the calm or the stormy sky.

He enumerated many examples of heroes immovable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil. He exhorted his hearers to lay aside their prejudices, and arm themselves against the shafts of malice or misfortune, by invulnerable patience, concluding, that this state only was happiness, and that this happiness was in every one's power.

Rasselas listened to him with the veneration due to the instructions of a superior being, and, waiting for him at the door, humbly implored the liberty of visiting so great a master of true wisdom. The lecturer hesitated a moment, when Rasselas put a

purse of gold into his hand, which he received with a mixture of joy and wonder.

“ I have found,” said the prince, at his return to Imlac, “ a man who can teach all that is necessary to be known, who, from the unshaken throne of rational fortitude, looks down on the scenes of life changing beneath him. He speaks, and attention watches his lips. He reasons, and conviction closes his periods. This man shall be my future guide: I will learn his doctrines, and imitate his life.”

“ Be not too hasty,” said Imlac, “ to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but they live like men.”

Rasselas, who could not conceive how any man could reason so forcibly without feeling the cogency of his own arguments, paid his visit in a few days, and was denied admission. He had now learned the power of money, and made his way by a piece of gold to the inner apartment, where he found the philosopher in a room half darkened, with his eyes misty, and his face pale. “ Sir,” said he, “ you are come at a time when all human friendship is useless; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied. My daughter, my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the comforts of my age, died last night of a fever. My views, my purposes, my hopes are at an end: I am now a lonely being disunited from society.”

“ Sir,” said the prince, “ mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised: we know that death is always near, and it should therefore always be expected.” “ Young man,” answered the

philosopher, “you speak like one that has never felt the pangs of separation.” “Have you then forgot the precepts,” said Rasselas, “which you so powerfully enforced? Has wisdom no strength to arm the heart against calamity? Consider, that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same.” “What comfort,” said the mourner, “can truth and reason afford me? of what effect are they now, but to tell me, that my daughter will not be restored?”

The prince, whose humanity would not suffer him to insult misery with reproof, went away convinced of the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GLIMPSE OF PASTORAL LIFE.

HE was still eager upon the same inquiry; and having heard of a hermit that lived near the lowest cataract of the Nile, and filled the whole country with the fame of his sanctity, resolved to visit his retreat, and inquire whether that felicity, which publick life could not afford, was to be found in solitude; and whether a man, whose age and virtue made him venerable, could teach any peculiar art of shunning evils, or enduring them?

Imlac and the princess agreed to accompany him, and, after the necessary preparations, they began their journey. Their way lay through the fields, where shepherds tended their flocks, and the lambs were playing upon the pasture. “This,” said the

poet, "is the life which has been often celebrated for its innocence and quiet; let us pass the heat of the day among the shepherds' tents, and know whether all our searches are not to terminate in pastoral simplicity."

The proposal pleased them, and they induced the shepherds, by small presents and familiar questions, to tell their opinion of their own state: they were so rude and ignorant, so little able to compare the good with the evil of the occupation, and so indistinct in their narratives and descriptions, that very little could be learned from them. But it was evident that their hearts were cankered with discontent; that they considered themselves as condemned to labour for the luxury of the rich, and looked up with stupid malevolence toward those that were placed above them.

The princess pronounced with vehemence, that she would never suffer these envious savages to be her companions, and that she should not soon be desirous of seeing any more specimens of rustick happiness; but could not believe that all the accounts of primeval pleasures were fabulous; and was yet in doubt, whether life had any thing that could be justly preferred to the placid gratifications of fields and woods. She hoped that the time would come, when, with a few virtuous and elegant companions, she should gather flowers planted by her own hand, fondle the lambs of her own ewe, and listen, without care, among brooks and breezes, to one of her maidens reading in the shade.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DANGER OF PROSPERITY.

ON the next day they continued their journey, till the heat compelled them to look round for shelter. At a small distance they saw a thick wood, which they no sooner entered than they perceived that they were approaching the habitations of men. The shrubs were diligently cut away to open walks where the shades were darkest ; the boughs of opposite trees were artificially interwoven ; seats of flowery turf were raised in vacant spaces, and a rivulet, that wantoned along the side of a winding path, had its banks sometimes opened into small basins, and its stream sometimes obstructed by little mounds of stone, heaped together to increase its murmurs.

They passed slowly through the wood, delighted with such unexpected accommodations, and entertained each other with conjecturing what, or who, he could be, that in those rude and unfrequented regions, had leisure and art for such harmless luxury.

As they advanced they heard the sound of musick, and saw youths and virgins dancing in the grove ; and, going still further, beheld a stately palace built upon a hill surrounded with woods. The laws of eastern hospitality allowed them to enter, and the master welcomed them like a man liberal and wealthy.

He was skilful enough in appearances soon to discern that they were no common guests, and spread his table with magnificence. The eloquence

of Imlac caught his attention, and the lofty courtesy of the princess excited his respect. When they offered to depart he entreated their stay, and was the next day still more unwilling to dismiss them than before. They were easily persuaded to stop, and civility grew up in time to freedom and confidence.

The prince now saw all the domesticks cheerful, and all the face of nature smiling round the place, and could not forbear to hope that he should find here what he was seeking ; but when he was congratulating the master upon his possessions, he answered with a sigh, “ My condition has indeed the appearance of happiness, but appearances are delusive. My prosperity puts my life in danger ; the Bassa of Egypt is my enemy, incensed only by my wealth and popularity. I have been hitherto protected against him by the princes of the country ; but, as the favour of the great is uncertain, I know not how soon my defenders may be persuaded to share the plunder with the Bassa. I have sent my treasures into a distant country, and, upon the first alarm, am prepared to follow them. Then will my enemies riot in my mansion, and enjoy the gardens which I have planted.”

They all joined in lamenting his danger, and deprecating his exile : and the princess was so much disturbed with the tumult of grief and indignation, that she retired to her apartment. They continued with their kind inviter a few days longer, and then went forward to find the hermit.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HAPPINESS OF SOLITUDE. THE HERMIT'S HISTORY.

THEY came on the third day, by the direction of the peasants, to the hermit's cell: it was a cavern in the side of a mountain, overshadowed with palm-trees; at such a distance from the cataract, that nothing more was heard than a gentle uniform murmur, such as composed the mind to pensive meditation, especially when it was assisted by the wind whistling among the branches. The first rude essay of nature had been so much improved by human labour, that the cave contained several apartments appropriated to different uses, and often afforded lodging to travellers, whom darkness or tempests happened to overtake.

The hermit sat on a bench at the door, to enjoy the coolness of the evening. On one side lay a book with pens and papers, on the other mechanical instruments of various kinds. As they approached him unregarded, the princess observed that he had not the countenance of a man that had found, or could teach the way to happiness.

They saluted him with great respect, which he repaid like a man not unaccustomed to the forms of courts. "My children," said he, "if you have lost your way, you shall be willingly supplied with such conveniences for the night as this cavern will afford. I have all that nature requires, and you will not expect delicacies in a hermit's cell."

They thanked him, and, entering, were pleased with the neatness and regularity of the place. The hermit set flesh and wine before them, though he fed only upon fruits and water. His discourse was cheerful without levity, and pious without enthusiasm. He soon gained the esteem of his guests, and the princess repented of her hasty censure.

At last Imlac began thus: "I do not now wonder that your reputation is so far extended; we have heard at Cairo of your wisdom, and came hither to implore your direction for this young man and maiden in the *choice of life*."

"To him that lives well," answered the hermit, "every form of life is good; nor can I give any other rule for choice, than to remove from all apparent evil."

"He will remove most certainly from evil," said the prince, "who shall devote himself to that solitude which you have recommended by your example."

"I have indeed lived fifteen years in solitude," said the hermit, "but have no desire that my example should gain any imitators. In my youth I professed arms, and was raised by degrees to the highest military rank. I have traversed wide countries at the head of my troops, and seen many battles and sieges. At last, being disgusted by the preferments of a younger officer, and feeling that my vigour was beginning to decay, I was resolved to close my life in peace, having found the world full of snares, discord, and misery. I had once escaped from the pursuit of the enemy by the shelter of this cavern, and therefore chose it for my final residence. I employed artificers to form it into

chambers, and stored it with all that I was likely to want.

“ For some time after my retreat, I rejoiced like a tempest-beaten sailor at his entrance into the harbour, being delighted with the sudden change of the noise and hurry of war to stillness and repose. When the pleasure of novelty went away, I employed my hours in examining the plants which grow in the valley, and the minerals which I collected from the rocks. But that inquiry is now grown tasteless and irksome. I have been for some time unsettled and distracted : my mind is disturbed with a thousand perplexities of doubt, and vanities of imagination, which hourly prevail upon me, because I have no opportunities of relaxation or diversion. I am sometimes ashamed to think that I could not secure myself from vice, but by retiring from the exercise of virtue, and begin to suspect that I was rather impelled by resentment, than led by devotion, into solitude. My fancy riots in scenes of folly, and I lament that I have lost so much, and have gained so little. In solitude, if I escape the example of bad men, I want likewise the counsel and conversation of the good. I have been long comparing the evils with the advantages of society, and resolve to return into the world to-morrow. The life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout.”

They heard his resolution with surprise, but after a short pause, offered to conduct him to Cairo. He dug up a considerable treasure which he had hid among the rocks, and accompanied them to the city, on which, as he approached it, he gazed with rapture.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HAPPINESS OF A LIFE LED ACCORDING TO
NATURE.

RASSELAS went often to an assembly of learned men, who met at stated times to unbend their minds, and compare their opinions. Their manners were somewhat coarse, but their conversation was instructive, and their disputations acute, though sometimes too violent, and often continued till neither controvertist remembered upon what question they began. Some faults were almost general among them : every one was desirous to dictate to the rest, and every one was pleased to hear the genius or knowledge of another depreciated.

In this assembly Rasselas was relating his interview with the hermit, and the wonder with which he heard him censure a course of life which he had so deliberately chosen, and so laudably followed. The sentiments of the hearers were various. Some were of opinion, that the folly of his choice had been justly punished by condemnation to perpetual perseverance. One of the youngest among them, with great vehemence, pronounced him an hypocrite. Some talked of the right of society to the labour of individuals, and considered retirement as a desertion of duty. Others readily allowed, that there was a time when the claims of the publick were satisfied, and when a man might properly sequester himself, to review his life, and purify his heart.

One, who appeared more affected with the narrative than the rest, thought it likely, that the her-

mit would, in a few years, go back to his retreat, and, perhaps, if shame did not restrain, or death intercept him, return once more from his retreat into the world : “ For the hope of happiness,” said he, “ is so strongly impressed, that the longest experience is not able to efface it. Of the present state, whatever it be, we feel, and are forced to confess, the misery ; yet, when the same state is again at a distance, imagination paints it as desirable. But the time will surely come, when desire will be no longer our torment, and no man shall be wretched but by his own fault.”

“ This,” said a philosopher, “ who had heard him with tokens of great impatience, is the present condition of a wise man. The time is already come, when none are wretched but by their own fault. Nothing is more idle than to inquire after happiness, which nature has kindly placed within our reach. The way to be happy is to live according to nature, in obedience to that universal and unalterable law with which every heart is originally impressed ; which is not written on it by precept, but engraven by destiny, not instilled by education, but infused at our nativity. He that lives according to nature will suffer nothing from the delusions of hope, or importunities of desire : he will receive and reject with equability of temper ; and act or suffer as the reason of things shall alternately prescribe. Other men may amuse themselves with subtle definitions, or intricate ratiocinations. Let them learn to be wise by easier means : let them observe the hind of the forest, and the linnet of the grove : let them consider the life of animals, whose motions are regulated by instinct ; they obey their guide and

are happy. Let us therefore, at length, cease to dispute, and learn to live ; throw away the incumbrance of precepts, which they who utter them with so much pride and pomp do not understand, and carry with us this simple and intelligible maxim, That deviation from nature is deviation from happiness."

When he had spoken, he looked round him with a placid air, and enjoyed the consciousness of his own beneficence. "Sir," said the prince, with great modesty, "as I, like all the rest of mankind, am desirous of felicity, my closest attention has been fixed upon your discourse : I doubt not the truth of a position which a man so learned has so confidently advanced. Let me only know what it is to live according to nature."

"When I find young men so humble and so docile," said the philosopher, "I can deny them no information which my studies have enabled me to afford. To live according to nature, is to act always with due regard to the fitness arising from the relations and qualities of causes and effects ; to concur with the great and unchangeable scheme of universal felicity ; to co-operate with the general disposition and tendency of the present system of things."

The prince soon found that this was one of the sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer. He therefore bowed and was silent, and the philosopher, supposing him satisfied, and the rest vanquished, rose up and departed with the air of a man that had co-operated with the present system.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PRINCE AND HIS SISTER DIVIDE BETWEEN
THEM THE WORK OF OBSERVATION.

RASSELAS returned home full of reflections, doubtful how to direct his future steps. Of the way to happiness he found the learned and simple equally ignorant ; but, as he was yet young, he flattered himself that he had time remaining for more experiments, and further inquiries. He communicated to Imlac his observations and his doubts, but was answered by him with new doubts, and remarks that gave him no comfort. He therefore discoursed more frequently and freely with his sister, who had yet the same hope with himself, and always assisted him to give some reason why, though he had been hitherto frustrated, he might succeed at last.

“ We have hitherto,” said she, “ known but little of the world : we have never yet been either great or mean. In our own country, though we had royalty, we had no power, and in this we have not yet seen the private recesses of domestick peace. Imlac favours not our search, lest we should in time find him mistaken. We will divide the task between us : you shall try what is to be found in the splendour of courts, and I will range the shades of humbler life. Perhaps command and authority may be the supreme blessings, as they afford most opportunities of doing good : or, perhaps, what this world can give may be found in the modest habitations of middle fortune ; too low for great designs, and too high for penury and distress.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRINCE EXAMINES THE HAPPINESS OF HIGH STATIONS.

RASSELAS applauded the design, and appeared next day with a splendid retinue at the court of the Bassa. He was soon distinguished for his magnificence, and admitted, as a prince whose curiosity had brought him from distant countries, to an intimacy with the great officers, and frequent conversation with the Bassa himself.

He was at first inclined to believe, that the man must be pleased with his own condition, whom all approached with reverence, and heard with obedience, and who had the power to extend his edicts to a whole kingdom. "There can be no pleasure," said he, "equal to that of feeling at once the joy of thousands all made happy by wise administration. Yet, since, by the law of subordination, this sublime delight can be in one nation but the lot of one, it is surely reasonable to think, that there is some satisfaction more popular and accessible, and that millions can hardly be subjected to the will of a single man, only to fill his particular breast with incommunicable content."

These thoughts were often in his mind, and he found no solution of the difficulty. But as presents and civilities gained him more familiarity, he found that almost every man who stood high in employment hated all the rest, and was hated by them, and that their lives were a continual succession of plots and detections, stratagems and escapes, faction

and treachery. Many of those who surrounded the Bassa were sent only to watch and report his conduct ; every tongue was muttering censure, and every eye was searching for a fault.

At last the letters of revocation arrived, the Bassa was carried in chains to Constantinople, and his name was mentioned no more.

“ What are we now to think of the prerogatives of power,” said Rasselas to his sister ; “ is it without any efficacy to good ? or, is the subordinate degree only dangerous, and the supreme safe and glorious ? Is the Sultan the only happy man in his dominions ? or, is the Sultan himself subject to the torments of suspicion, and the dread of enemies ? ”

In a short time the second Bassa was deposed. The Sultan, that had advanced him, was murdered by the Janisaries, and his successor had other views and different favourites.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRINCESS PURSUES HER INQUIRY WITH MORE DILIGENCE THAN SUCCESS.

THE princess, in the mean time, insinuated herself into many families ; for there are few doors, through which liberality, joined with good-humour, cannot find its way. The daughters of many houses were airy and cheerful, but Nekayah had been too long accustomed to the conversation of Imlac and her brother to be much pleased with childish levity, and prattle which had no meaning. She found their thoughts narrow, their wishes low, and their merriment often artificial. Their pleasures, poor as

they were, could not be preserved pure, but were embittered by petty competitions and worthless emulation. They were always jealous of the beauty of each other ; of a quality to which solicitude can add nothing, and from which detraction can take nothing away. Many were in love with triflers like themselves, and many fancied that they were in love when in truth they were only idle. Their affection was not fixed on sense or virtue, and therefore seldom ended but in vexation. Their grief, however, like their joy, was transient ; every thing floated in their mind unconnected with the past or future, so that one desire easily gave way to another, as a second stone cast into the water effaces and confounds the circles of the first.

With these girls she played as with inoffensive animals, and found them proud of her countenance, and weary of her company.

But her purpose was to examine more deeply, and her affability easily persuaded the hearts that were swelling with sorrow to discharge their secrets in her ear : and those whom hope flattered, or prosperity delighted, often courted her to partake their pleasures.

The princess and her brother commonly met in the evening in a private summer-house on the bank of the Nile, and related to each other the occurrences of the day. As they were sitting together, the princess cast her eyes upon the river that flowed before her. "Answer," said she, "great father of waters, thou that rollest thy floods through eighty nations, to the invocations of the daughter of thy native king. Tell me if thou waterest, through all

thy course, a single habitation from which thou dost not hear the murmurs of complaint?"

" You are then," said Rasselas, " not more successful in private houses than I have been in courts." " I have, since the last partition of our provinces," said the princess, " enabled myself to enter familiarly into many families, where there was the fairest show of prosperity and peace, and know not one house that is not haunted by some fury that destroys their quiet.

" I did not seek ease among the poor, because I concluded that there it could not be found. But I saw many poor, whom I had supposed to live in affluence. Poverty has, in large cities, very different appearances: it is often concealed in splendour, and often in extravagance. It is the care of a very great part of mankind to conceal their indigence from the rest: they support themselves by temporary expedients, and every day is lost in contriving for the morrow.

" This, however, was an evil, which, though frequent, I saw with less pain, because I could relieve it. Yet some have refused my bounties; more offended with my quickness to detect their wants, than pleased with my readiness to succour them: and others, whose exigencies compelled them to admit my kindness, have never been able to forgive their benefactress. Many, however, have been sincerely grateful, without the ostentation of gratitude, or the hope of other favours."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PRINCESS CONTINUES HER REMARKS UPON
PRIVATE LIFE.

NEKAYAH perceiving her brother's attention fixed, proceeded in her narrative.

" In families, where there is or is not poverty, there is commonly discord : if a kingdom be, as Imlac tells us, a great family, a family likewise is a little kingdom, torn with factions, and exposed to revolutions. An unpractised observer expects the love of parents and children to be constant and equal ; but this kindness seldom continues beyond the years of infancy : in a short time the children become rivals to their parents. Benefits are allayed by reproaches, and gratitude debased by envy.

" Parents and children seldom act in concert : each child endeavours to appropriate the esteem or fondness of the parents, and the parents, with yet less temptation, betray each other to their children ; thus some place their confidence in the father, and some in the mother, and by degrees the house is filled with artifices and feuds.

" The opinions of children and parents, of the young and the old, are naturally opposite, by the contrary effects of hope and despondence, of expectation and experience, without crime or folly on either side. The colours of life in youth and age appear different, as the face of nature in spring and winter. And how can children credit the assertions of parents, which their own eyes show them to be false ?

“ Few parents act in such a manner as much to enforce their maxims by the credit of their lives. The old man trusts wholly to slow contrivance and gradual progression : the youth expects to force his way by genius, vigour, and precipitance. The old man pays regard to riches, and the youth reverences virtue. The old man deifies prudence : the youth commits himself to magnanimity and chance. The young man, who intends no ill, believes that none is intended, and therefore acts with openness and candour : but his father, having suffered the injuries of fraud, is impelled to suspect, and too often allured to practise it. Age looks with anger on the temerity of youth, and youth with contempt on the scrupulosity of age. Thus parents and children, for the greatest part, live on to love less and less : and, if those whom nature has thus closely united are the torments of each other, where shall we look for tenderness and consolation ?”

“ Surely,” said the prince, “ you must have been unfortunate in your choice of acquaintance : I am unwilling to believe, that the most tender of all relations is thus impeded in its effects by natural necessity.”

“ Domestick discord,” answered she, “ is not inevitably and fatally necessary ; but yet it is not easily avoided. We seldom see that a whole family is virtuous : the good and evil cannot well agree ; and the evil can yet less agree with one another : even the virtuous fall sometimes to variance, when their virtues are of different kinds, and tending to extremes. In general, those parents have most

reverence who most deserve it: for he that lives well cannot be despised.

" Many other evils infest private life. Some are the slaves of servants whom they have trusted with their affairs. Some are kept in continual anxiety to the caprice of rich relations, whom they cannot please, and dare not offend. Some husbands are imperious, and some wives perverse: and, as it is always more easy to do evil than good, though the wisdom or virtue of one can very rarely make many happy, the folly or vice of one may often make many miserable."

" If such be the general effect of marriage," said the prince, " I shall, for the future, think it dangerous to connect my interest with that of another, lest I should be unhappy by my partner's fault."

" I have met," said the princess, " with many who live single for that reason; but I never found that their prudence ought to raise envy. They dream away their time without friendship, without fondness, and are driven to rid themselves of the day, for which they have no use, by childish amusements, or vicious delights. They act as beings under the constant sense of some known inferiority, that fills their minds with rancour, and their tongues with censure. They are peevish at home, and malevolent abroad; and, as the outlaws of human nature, make it their business and their pleasure to disturb that society which debars them from its privileges. To live without feeling or exciting sympathy, to be fortunate without adding to the felicity of others, or afflicted without tasting the balm of pity, is a state more gloomy than solitude: it is not retreat,

but exclusion from mankind. Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures."

"What then is to be done?" said Rasselas; "the more we inquire, the less we can resolve. Surely he is most likely to please himself that has no other inclination to regard."

CHAPTER XXVII.

DISQUISITION UPON GREATNESS.

THE conversation had a short pause. The prince, having considered his sister's observations, told her, that she had surveyed life with prejudice, and supposed misery where she did not find it.

"Your narrative," says he, "throws yet a darker gloom upon the prospects of futurity: the predictions of Imlac were but faint sketches of the evils painted by Nekayah. I have been lately convinced that quiet is not the daughter of grandeur, or of power: that her presence is not to be bought by wealth, nor enforced by conquest. It is evident, that as any man acts in a wider compass, he must be more exposed to opposition from enmity, or miscarriage from chance; whoever has many to please or to govern, must use the ministry of many agents, some of whom will be wicked, and some ignorant; by some he will be misled, and by others betrayed. If he gratifies one he will offend another: those that are not favoured will think themselves injured; and, since favours can be conferred but upon few, the greater number will be always discontented."

“ The discontent,” said the princess, “ which is thus unreasonable, I hope that I shall always have spirit to despise, and you, power to repress.”

“ Discontent,” answered Rasselas, “ will not always be without reason under the most just and vigilant administration of publick affairs. None, however attentive, can always discover that merit which indigence or faction may happen to obscure; and none, however powerful, can always reward it. Yet, he that sees inferiour desert advanced above him, will naturally impute that preference to partiality or caprice; and, indeed, it can scarcely be hoped that any man, however magnanimous by nature, or exalted by condition, will be able to persist for ever in the fixed and inexorable justice of distribution; he will sometimes indulge his own affections, and sometimes those of his favourites; he will permit some to please him who can never serve him; he will discover in those whom he loves, qualities which in reality they do not possess; and to those, from whom he receives pleasure, he will in his turn endeavour to give it. Thus will recommendations sometimes prevail which were purchased by money, or by the more destructive bribery of flattery and servility.

“ He that has much to do, will do something wrong, and of that wrong must suffer the consequences; and, if it were possible that he should always act rightly, yet when such numbers are to judge of his conduct, the bad will censure and obstruct him by malevolence, and the good sometimes by mistake.

“ The highest stations cannot, therefore, hope to be the abodes of happiness, which I would willingly believe to have fled from thrones and palaces to seats of humble privacy and placid obscurity. For what can hinder the satisfaction, or intercept the expectations, of him whose abilities are adequate to his employments, who sees with his own eyes the whole circuit of his influence, who chooses by his own knowledge all whom he trusts, and whom none are tempted to deceive by hope or fear? Surely he has nothing to do but to love and to be loved, to be virtuous and to be happy.”

“ Whether perfect happiness would be procured by perfect goodness,” said Nekayah, “ this world will never afford an opportunity of deciding. But this, at least, may be maintained, that we do not always find visible happiness in proportion to visible virtue. All natural, and almost all political evils, are incident alike to the bad and good: they are confounded in the misery of a famine, and not much distinguished in the fury of a faction; they sink together in a tempest, and are driven together from their country by invaders. All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience, a steady prospect of a happier state; this may enable us to endure calamity with patience; but remember that patience must suppose pain.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RASSELAS AND NEKAYAH CONTINUE THEIR CONVERSATION.

“ DEAR princess,” said Rasselas, “ you fall into the common errors of exaggerated declamation, by producing, in a familiar disquisition, examples of national calamities, and scenes of extensive misery, which are found in books rather than in the world, and which, as they are horrid, are ordained to be rare. Let us not imagine evils which we do not feel, nor injure life by misrepresentations. I cannot bear that querulous eloquence which threatens every city with a siege like that of Jerusalem, that makes famine attend on every flight of locusts, and suspends pestilence on the wing of every blast that issues from the south.

“ On necessary and inevitable evils, which overwhelm kingdoms at once, all disputation is vain : when they happen they must be endured. But it is evident, that these bursts of universal distress are more dreaded than felt ; thousands and ten thousands flourish in youth, and wither in age, without the knowledge of any other than domestick evils, and share the same pleasures and vexations, whether their kings are mild or cruel, whether the armies of their country pursue their enemies, or retreat before them. While courts are disturbed with intestine competitions, and ambassadors are negotiating in foreign countries, the smith still plies his anvil, and the husbandman drives his plough forward ; the necessities of life are required and ob-

tained ; and the successive business of the seasons continues to make its wonted revolutions.

“ Let us cease to consider what, perhaps, may never happen, and what, when it shall happen, will laugh at human speculation. We will not endeavour to modify the motions of the elements, or to fix the destiny of kingdoms. It is our business to consider what beings like us may perform ; each labouring for his own happiness, by promoting within his circle, however narrow, the happiness of others.

“ Marriage is evidently the dictate of nature ; men and women are made to be companions of each other, and therefore I cannot be persuaded but that marriage is one of the means of happiness.”

“ I know not,” said the princess, “ whether marriage be more than one of the innumerable modes of human misery. When I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collisions of contrary desire where both are urged by violent impulses, the obstinate contests of disagreeable virtues, where both are supported by consciousness of good intention, I am sometimes disposed to think with the severer casuists of most nations, that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none; but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged, entangle themselves with indissoluble compacts.”

“ You seem to forget,” replied Rasselas, “ that you have, even now, represented celibacy as less happy than marriage. Both conditions may be bad,

but they cannot both be worst. Thus it happens when wrong opinions are entertained, that they mutually destroy each other, and leave the mind open to truth.”

“ I did not expect,” answered the princess, “ to hear that imputed to falsehood which is the consequence only of frailty. To the mind, as to the eye, it is difficult to compare with exactness objects vast in their extent, and various in their parts. Where we see or conceive the whole at once, we readily note the discriminations, and decide the preference: but of two systems, of which neither can be surveyed by any human being in its full compass of magnitude and multiplicity of complication, where is the wonder that, judging of the whole by parts, I am alternately affected by one and the other as either presses on my memory or fancy? We differ from ourselves just as we differ from each other, when we see only part of the question, as in the multifarious relations of politicks and morality; but when we perceive the whole at once, as in numerical computations, all agree in one judgment, and none ever varies his opinion.”

“ Let us not add,” said the prince, “ to the other evils of life, the bitterness of controversy, nor endeavour to vie with each other in subtilties of argument. We are employed in a search, of which both are equally to enjoy the success, or suffer by the miscarriage. It is therefore fit that we assist each other. You surely conclude too hastily from the infelicity of marriage against its institution: will not the misery of life prove equally that life cannot be the gift of Heaven? The world must be peopled by marriage, or peopled without it.”

“ How the world is to be peopled,” returned Nekayah, “ is not my care, and needs not be yours. I see no danger that the present generation should omit to leave successors behind them: we are not now inquiring for the world, but for ourselves.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DEBATE OF MARRIAGE CONTINUED.

“ THE good of the whole,” says Rasselias, “ is the same with the good of all its parts. If marriage be best for mankind, it must be evidently best for individuals, or a permanent and necessary duty must be the cause of evil, and some must be inevitably sacrificed to the convenience of others. In the estimate which you have made of the two states, it appears that the incommodities of a single life are, in a great measure, necessary and certain, but those of the conjugal state accidental and avoidable.

“ I cannot forbear to flatter myself, that prudence and benevolence will make marriage happy. The general folly of mankind is the cause of general complaint. What can be expected but disappointment and repentance from a choice made in the immaturity of youth, in the ardour of desire, without judgment without foresight, without inquiry after conformity of opinions, similarity of manners, rectitude of judgment, or purity of sentiment?

“ Such is the common process of marriage. A youth or maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home, and dream of one another.

Having little to divert attention, or diversify thought, they find themselves uneasy when they are apart, and therefore conclude that they shall be happy together. They marry, and discover what nothing but voluntary blindness before had concealed ; they wear out life in altercations, and charge nature with cruelty.

“ From those early marriages proceeds likewise the rivalry of parents and children : the son is eager to enjoy the world before the father is willing to forsake it, and there is hardly room at once for two generations. The daughter begins to bloom before the mother can be content to fade, and neither can forbear to wish for the absence of the other.

“ Surely all these evils may be avoided by that deliberation and delay which prudence prescribes to irrevocable choice. In the variety and jollity of youthful pleasures life may be well enough supported without the help of a partner. Longer time will increase experience, and wider views will allow better opportunities of inquiry and selection : one advantage, at least, will be certain ; the parents will be visibly older than their children.”

“ What reason cannot collect,” said Nekayah, “ and what experiment has not yet taught, can be known only from the report of others. I have been told that late marriages are not eminently happy. This is a question too important to be neglected, and I have often proposed it to those, whose accuracy of remark, and comprehensiveness of knowledge, made their suffrages worthy of regard. They have generally determined, that it is dangerous for a man and woman to suspend their fate upon each

other, at a time when opinions are fixed, and habits are established ; when friendships have been contracted on both sides, when life has been planned into method, and the mind has long enjoyed the contemplation of its own prospects.

“ It is scarcely possible that two travelling through the world under the conduct of chance, should have been both directed to the same path, and it will not often happen that either will quit the track which custom has made pleasing. When the desultory levity of youth has settled into regularity, it is soon succeeded by pride ashamed to yield, or obstinacy delighting to contend. And even though mutual esteem produces mutual desire to please, time itself, as it modifies unchangeably the external mien, determines likewise the direction of the passions, and gives an inflexible rigidity to the manners. Long customs are not easily broken : he that attempts to change the course of his own life, very often labours in vain ; and how shall we do that for others, which we are seldom able to do for ourselves ? ”

“ But surely,” interposed the prince, “ you suppose the chief motive of choice forgotten or neglected. Whenever I shall seek a wife, it shall be my first question, whether she be willing to be led by reason ? ”

“ Thus it is,” said Nekayah, “ that philosophers are deceived. There are a thousand familiar disputes which reason never can decide ; questions that elude investigation, and make logick ridiculous ; cases where something must be done, and where little can be said. Consider the state of mankind, and inquire how few can be supposed to act upon any

occasions, whether small or great, with all the reasons of action present to their minds. Wretched would be the pair above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason, every morning, all the minute detail of a domestick day.

“ Those who marry at an advanced age, will probably escape the encroachments of their children; but, in diminution of this advantage, they will be likely to leave them, ignorant and helpless, to a guardian’s mercy: or, if that should not happen, they must at least go out of the world before they see those whom they love best either wise or great.

“ From their children, if they have less to fear, they have less also to hope, and they lose, without equivalent, the joys of early love, and the convenience of uniting with manners pliant, and minds susceptible of new impressions, which might wear away their dissimilitudes by long cohabitation, as soft bodies, by continual attrition, conform their surfaces to each other.

“ I believe it will be found that those who marry late are best pleased with their children, and those who marry early with their partners.”

“ The union of these two affections,” said Rasselas, “ would produce all that could be wished. Perhaps there is a time when marriage might unite them, a time neither too early for the father, nor too late for the husband.”

“ Every hour,” answered the princess, “ confirms my prejudice in favour of the position so often uttered by the mouth of Imlac, ‘ That nature sets her gifts on the right hand and on the left.’ Those conditions, which flatter hope and attract desire, are so constituted, that, as we approach one, we

recede from another. There are goods so opposed that we cannot seize both, but, by too much prudence, may pass between them at too great a distance to reach either. This is often the fate of long consideration ; he does nothing who endeavours to do more than is allowed to humanity. Flatter not yourself with contrarieties of pleasure. Of the blessings set before you make your choice, and be content. No man can taste the fruits of autumn while he is delighting his scent with the flowers of the spring : no man can, at the same time, fill his cup from the source and from the mouth of the Nile.”

CHAPTER XXX.

IMLAC ENTERS, AND CHANGES THE CONVERSATION.

HERE Imlac entered, and interrupted them. “ Imlac,” said Rasselas, “ I have been taking from the princess the dismal history of private life, and am almost discouraged from further search.”

“ It seems to me,” said Imlac, “ that while you are making the choice of life, you neglect to live. You wander about a single city, which, however large and diversified, can now afford few novelties, and forget that you are in a country, famous among the earliest monarchies for the power and wisdom of its inhabitants ; a country where the sciences first dawned that illuminate the world, and beyond which the arts cannot be traced of civil society or domestick life.

“ The old Egyptians have left behind them monuments of industry and power, before which all

European magnificence is confessed to fade away. The ruins of their architecture are the schools of modern builders, and from the wonders which time has spared we may conjecture, though uncertainly, what it has destroyed."

" My curiosity," said Rasselas, " does not very strongly lead me to survey piles of stone, or mounds of earth ; my business is with man. I came hither not to measure fragments of temples, or trace choked aqueducts, but to look upon the various scenes of the present world."

" The things that are now before us," said the princess, " require attention, and deserve it. What have I to do with the heroes or the monuments of ancient times ; with times which never can return, and heroes, whose form of life was different from all that the present condition of mankind requires or allows?"

" To know any thing," returned the poet, " we must know its effects ; to see men we must see their works, that we may learn what reason has dictated or passion has incited, and find what are the most powerful motives of action. To judge rightly of the present we must oppose it to the past ; for all judgment is comparative, and of the future nothing can be known. The truth is, that no mind is much employed upon the present : recollection and anticipation fill up almost all our moments. Our passions are joy and grief, love and hatred, hope and fear. Of joy and grief the past is the object, and the future of hope and fear ; even love and hatred respect the past, for the cause must have been before the effect.

“ The present state of things is the consequence of the former, and it is natural to inquire what were the sources of the good that we enjoy, or the evil that we suffer. If we act only for ourselves, to neglect the study of history is not prudent : if we are intrusted with the care of others, it is not just. Ignorance, when it is voluntary, is criminal ; and he may properly be charged with evil who refused to learn how he might prevent it.

“ There is no part of history so generally useful as that which relates the progress of the human mind, the gradual improvement of reason, the successive advances of science, the vicissitudes of learning and ignorance which are the light and darkness of thinking beings, the extinction and resuscitation of arts, and the revolutions of the intellectual world. If accounts of battles and invasions are peculiarly the business of princes, the useful or elegant arts are not to be neglected ; those who have kingdoms to govern, have understandings to cultivate.

“ Example is always more efficacious than precept. A soldier is formed in war, and a painter must copy pictures. In this, contemplative life has the advantage : great actions are seldom seen, but the labours of art are always at hand for those who desire to know what art has been able to perform.

“ When the eye or the imagination is struck with an uncommon work, the next transition of an active mind is to the means by which it was performed. Here begins the true use of such contemplation ; we enlarge our comprehension by new ideas, and perhaps recover some art lost to mankind, or learn what is less perfectly known in our

own country. At least we compare our own with former times, and either rejoice at our improvements, or, what is the first motion towards good, discover our defects."

"I am willing," said the prince, "to see all that can deserve my search." "And I," said the princess, "shall rejoice to learn something of the manners of antiquity."

"The most pompous monument of Egyptian greatness, and one of the most bulky works of manual industry," said Imlac, "are the pyramids; fabrics raised before the time of history, and of which the earliest narratives afford us only uncertain traditions. Of these the greatest is still standing, very little injured by time."

"Let us visit them to-morrow," said Nekayah. "I have often heard of the pyramids, and shall not rest till I have seen them within and without with my own eyes."

CHAPTER XXX.

THEY VISIT THE PYRAMIDS.

THE resolution being thus taken, they set out the next day. They laid tents upon their camels, being resolved to stay among the pyramids till their curiosity was fully satisfied. They travelled gently, turned aside to every thing remarkable, stopped from time to time and conversed with the inhabitants, and observed the various appearances of towns ruined and inhabited, of wild and cultivated nature.

When they came to the great pyramid, they were astonished at the extent of the base, and the height of the top. Imlac explained to them the principles upon which the pyramidal form was chosen for a fabrick intended to co-extend its duration with that of the world : he showed that its gradual diminution gave it such stability, as defeated all the common attacks of the elements, and could scarcely be overthrown by earthquakes themselves, the least resistible of natural violence. A concussion that should shatter the pyramid would threaten the dissolution of the continent.

They measured all its dimensions, and pitched their tents at its foot. Next day they prepared to enter its interior apartments, and having hired the common guides, climbed up to the first passage, when the favourite of the princess, looking into the cavity, stepped back and trembled. "Pekualah," said the princess, "of what art thou afraid?" "Of the narrow entrance," answered the lady, "and of the dreadful gloom. I dare not enter a place which must surely be inhabited by unquiet souls. The original possessors of these dreadful vaults will start up before us, and perhaps shut us in for ever." She spoke, and threw her arms round the neck of her mistress.

"If all your fear be of apparitions," said the prince, "I will promise you safety : there is no danger from the dead ; he that is once buried will be seen no more."

"That the dead are seen no more," said Imlac, "I will not undertake to maintain, against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages, and of

all nations. There is no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which perhaps prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth: those, that never heard of one another, would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers can very little weaken the general evidence; and some who deny it with their tongues confess it by their fears.

“ Yet I do not mean to add new terrors to those which have already seized upon Pekuah. There can be no reason why spectres should haunt the pyramid more than other places, or why they should have power or will to hurt innocence and purity. Our entrance is no violation of their privileges; we can take nothing from them, how then can we offend them?”

“ My dear Pekuah,” said the princess, “ I will always go before you, and Imlac shall follow you. Remember that you are the companion of the princess of Abissinia.”

“ If the princess is pleased that her servant should die,” returned the lady, “ let her command some death less dreadful than enclosure in this horrid cavern. You know I dare not disobey you: I must go if you command me; but, if I once enter, I never shall come back.”

The princess saw that her fear was too strong for expostulation or reproof, and embracing her, told her that she should stay in the tent till their return. Pekuah was yet not satisfied, but entreated the princess not to pursue so dreadful a purpose as

that of entering the recesses of the pyramid. “ Though I cannot teach courage,” said Nekayah, “ I must not learn cowardice; nor leave at last undone what I came hither only to do.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THEY ENTER THE PYRAMID.

PEKUAH descended to the tents, and the rest entered the pyramid: they passed through the galleries, surveyed the vaults of marble, and examined the chest in which the body of the founder is supposed to have been reposed. They then sat down in one of the most spacious chambers to rest a while before they attempted to return.

“ We have now,” said Imlac, “ gratified our minds with an exact view of the greatest work of man, except the wall of China.

“ Of the wall it is very easy to assign the motive. It secured a wealthy and timorous nation from the incursions of Barbarians, whose unskilfulness in arts made it easier for them to supply their wants by rapine than by industry, and who from time to time poured in upon the habitations of peaceful commerce, as vultures descend upon domestick fowl. Their celerity and fierceness made the wall necessary, and their ignorance made it efficacious.

“ But for the pyramids no reason has ever been given adequate to the cost and labour of the work. The narrowness of the chambers proves that it could afford no retreat from enemies, and treasures might have been reposed at far less expense with

equal security. It seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly upon life, and must be always appeased by some employment. Those who have already all that they can enjoy must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use, till use is supplied, must begin to build for vanity, and extend his plan to the utmost power of human performance, that he may not be soon reduced to form another wish.

“ I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king, whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life, by seeing thousands labouring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art, that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the pyramids, and confess thy folly!”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PRINCESS MEETS WITH AN UNEXPECTED MISFORTUNE.

THEY rose up, and returned through the cavity at which they had entered, and the princess prepared for her favourite a long narrative of dark labyrinths, and costly rooms, and of the different impressions which the varieties of the way had made

upon her. But when they came to their train, they found every one silent and dejected : the men discovered shame and fear in their countenances, and the women were weeping in the tents.

What had happened they did not try to conjecture, but immediately inquired. " You had scarcely entered into the pyramid," said one of the attendants, " when a troop of Arabs rushed upon us : we were too few to resist them, and too slow to escape. They were about to search the tents, set us on our camels, and drive us along before them, when the approach of some Turkish horsemen put them to flight ; but they seized the lady Pekuah with her two maids, and carried them away : the Turks are now pursuing them by our instigation, but I fear they will not be able to overtake them."

The princess was overpowered with surprise and grief. Rasselas, in the first heat of his resentment, ordered his servants to follow him, and prepared to pursue the robbers with his sabre in his hand. " Sir," said Imlac, " what can you hope from violence or valour ? the Arabs are mounted on horses trained to battle and retreat ; we have only beasts of burden. By leaving our present station we may lose the princess, but cannot hope to regain Pekuah."

In a short time the Turks returned, having not been able to reach the enemy. The princess burst out into new lamentations, and Rasselas could scarcely forbear to reproach them with cowardice ; but Imlac was of opinion, that the escape of the Arabs was no addition to their misfortune, for perhaps they would have killed their captives rather than have resigned them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THEY RETURN TO CAIRO WITHOUT PEKUAH.

THERE was nothing to be hoped from longer stay. They returned to Cairo repenting of their curiosity, censuring the negligence of the government, lamenting their own rashness which had neglected to procure a guard, imagining many expedients by which the loss of Pekuah might have been prevented, and resolving to do something for her recovery, though none could find any thing proper to be done.

Nekayah retired to her chamber, where her women attempted to comfort her, by telling her that all had their troubles, and that lady Pekuah had enjoyed much happiness in the world for a long time, and might reasonably expect a change of fortune. They hoped that some good would befall her wheresoever she was, and that their mistress would find another friend who might supply her place.

The princess made them no answer, and they continued the form of condolence, not much grieved in their hearts that the favourite was lost.

Next day the prince presented to the Bassa a memorial of the wrong which he had suffered, and a petition for redress. The Bassa threatened to punish the robbers, but did not attempt to catch them, nor indeed could any account or description be given by which he might direct the pursuit.

It soon appeared that nothing would be done by authority. Governors, being accustomed to hear of more crimes than they can punish, and more wrongs

than they can redress, set themselves at ease by indiscriminate negligence, and presently forget the request when they lose sight of the petitioner.

Imlac then endeavoured to gain some intelligence by private agents. He found many who pretended to an exact knowledge of all the haunts of the Arabs, and to regular correspondence with their chiefs, and who readily undertook the recovery of Pekuah. Of these, some were furnished with money for their journey, and came back no more ; some were liberally paid for accounts which a few days discovered to be false. But the princess would not suffer any means, however improbable, to be left untried. While she was doing something she kept her hope alive. As one expedient failed, another was suggested ; when one messenger returned unsuccessful, another was despatched to a different quarter.

Two months had now passed, and of Pekuah nothing had been heard ; the hopes which they had endeavoured to raise in each other grew more languid, and the princess, when she saw nothing more to be tried, sunk down inconsolable in hopeless dejection. A thousand times she reproached herself with the easy compliance, by which she permitted her favourite to stay behind her. “ Had not my fondness,” said she, “ lessened my authority, Pekuah had not dared to talk of her terrors. She ought to have feared me more than spectres. A severe look would have overpowered her ; a peremptory command would have compelled obedience. Why did foolish indulgence prevail upon me ? Why did I not speak and refuse to hear ?

“Great princess,” said Imlac, “do not reproach yourself for your virtue, or consider that as blamable by which evil has accidentally been caused. Your tenderness for the timidity of Pekuah was generous and kind. When we act according to our duty, we commit the event to him by whose laws our actions are governed, and who will suffer none to be finally punished for obedience. When, in prospect of some good, whether natural or moral, we break the rules prescribed us, we withdraw from the direction of superior wisdom, and take all consequences upon ourselves. Man cannot so far know the connexion of causes and events, as that he may venture to do wrong in order to do right. When we pursue our end by lawful means, we may always console our miscarriage by the hope of future recompence. When we consult only our own policy, and attempt to find a nearer way to good, by over-leaping the settled boundaries of right and wrong, we cannot be happy even by success, because we cannot escape the consciousness of our fault: but, if we miscarry, the disappointment is irremediably embittered. How comfortless is the sorrow of him who feels at once the pangs of guilt, and the vexation of calamity which guilt has brought upon him?

“Consider, princess, what would have been your condition, if the lady Pekuah had entreated to accompany you, and being compelled to stay in the tents, had been carried away; or how would you have borne the thought, if you had forced her into the pyramid; and she had died before you in agonies of terror?”

“Had either happened,” said Nekayah, “I could

not have endured life till now : I should have been tortured to madness by the remembrance of such cruelty, or must have pined away in abhorrence of myself."

" This at least," said Imlac, " is the present reward of virtuous conduct, that no unlucky consequence can oblige us to repent it."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PRINCESS LANGUISHES FOR WANT OF PEKUAH.

NEKAYAH being thus reconciled to herself, found that no evil is insupportable but that which is accompanied with consciousness of wrong. She was, from that time, delivered from the violence of tempestuous sorrow, and sunk into silent pensiveness and gloomy tranquillity. She sat from morning to evening recollecting all that had been done or said by her Pekuah, treasured up with care every trifle on which Pekuah had set an accidental value, and which might recal to mind any little incident or careless conversation. The sentiments of her, whom she now expected to see no more, were treasured in her memory as rules of life, and she deliberated to no other end than to conjecture on any occasion what would have been the opinion and counsel of Pekuah.

The women, by whom she was attended, knew nothing of her real condition, and therefore she could not talk to them but with caution and reserve. She began to remit her curiosity, having no great care to collect notions which she had no conve-

nience of uttering. Rasselas endeavoured first to comfort, and afterwards to divert her; he hired musicians, to whom she seemed to listen, but did not hear them, and procured masters to instruct her in various arts, whose lectures, when they visited her again, were again to be repeated. She had lost her taste of pleasure, and her ambition of excellence. And her mind, though forced into short excursions, always recurred to the image of her friend.

Imlac was every morning earnestly enjoined to renew his inquiries, and was asked every night whether he had yet heard of Pekuah, till not being able to return the princess the answer that she desired, he was less and less willing to come into her presence. She observed his backwardness, and commanded him to attend her. "You are not," said she, "to confound impatience with resentment, or to suppose that I charge you with negligence, because I repine at your unsuccessfulness. I do not much wonder at your absence; I know that the unhappy are never pleasing, and that all naturally avoid the contagion of misery. To hear complaints is wearisome alike to the wretched and the happy; for who would cloud, by adventitious grief, the short gleams of gaiety which life allows us? or who, that is struggling under his own evils, will add to them the miseries of another?"

"The time is at hand, when none shall be disturbed any longer by the sighs of Nekayah: my search after happiness is now at an end. I am resolved to retire from the world with all its flatteries and deceits, and will hide myself in solitude without

any other care than to compose my thoughts, and regulate my hours by a constant succession of innocent occupations, till, with a mind purified from all earthly desires, I shall enter into that state, to which all are hastening, and in which I hope again to enjoy the friendship of Pekuah."

" Do not entangle your mind," said Imlac, " by irrevocable determinations, nor increase the burthen of life by a voluntary accumulation of misery : the weariness of retirement will continue or increase when the loss of Pekuah is forgotten. That you have been deprived of one pleasure, is no very good reason for rejection of the rest."

" Since Pekuah was taken from me," said the princess, " I have no pleasure to reject or to retain. She that has no one to love or trust has little to hope: She wants the radical principle of happiness. We may, perhaps, allow that what satisfaction this world can afford must arise from the conjunction of wealth, knowledge, and goodness: wealth is nothing but as it is bestowed, and knowledge nothing but as it is communicated: they must therefore be imparted to others, and to whom could I now delight to impart them? Goodness affords the only comfort which can be enjoyed without a partner, and goodness may be practised in retirement."

" How far solitude may admit goodness, or advance it, I shall not," replied Imlac, " dispute at present. Remember the confession of the pious hermit. You will wish to return into the world, when the image of your companion has left your thoughts."

" That time," said Nekayah, " will never come. The generous frankness, the modest obsequiousness,

and the faithful secrecy of my dear Pekuah, will always be more missed, as I shall live longer to see vice and folly."

" The state of a mind oppressed with a sudden calamity," said Imlac, " is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new created earth, who, when the first night came upon them, supposed that day would never return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they will be dispelled: yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease. But they who restrain themselves from receiving comfort do as the savages would have done, had they put out their eyes when it was dark. Our minds, like our bodies, are in continual flux; something is hourly lost, and something acquired. To lose much at once is inconvenient to either, but while the vital powers remain uninjured, nature will find the means of reparation. Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye, and while we glide along the stream of time, whatever we leave behind us is always lessening, and that which we approach increasing in magnitude. Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion: commit yourself again to the current of the world; Pekuah will vanish by degrees; you will meet in your way some other favourite, or learn to diffuse yourself in general conversation."

" At least," said the prince, " do not despair before all remedies have been tried: the inquiry after the unfortunate lady is still continued, and shall be carried on with yet greater diligence, on

condition that you will promise to wait a year for the event, without any unalterable resolution."

Nekayah thought this a reasonable demand, and made the promise to her brother, who had been advised by Imlac to require it. Imlac had, indeed, no great hope of regaining Pekuah, but he supposed, that if he could secure the interval of a year, the princess would be then in no danger of a cloister.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PEKUAH IS STILL REMEMBERED. THE PROGRESS OF SORROW.

NEKAYAH, seeing that nothing was omitted for the recovery of her favourite, and having, by her promise, set her intention of retirement at a distance, began imperceptibly to return to common cares and common pleasures. She rejoiced without her own consent at the suspension of her sorrows, and sometimes caught herself with indignation in the act of turning away her mind from the remembrance of her, whom yet she resolved never to forget.

She then appointed a certain hour of the day for meditation on the merits and fondness of Pekuah, and for some weeks retired constantly at the time fixed, and returned with her eyes swollen and her countenance clouded. By degrees she grew less scrupulous, and suffered any important and pressing avocation to delay the tribute of daily tears. She then yielded to less occasions; sometimes forgot what she was indeed afraid to remember, and, at

last, wholly released herself from the duty of periodical affliction.

Her real love of Pekuah was yet not diminished. A thousand occurrences brought her back to memory, and a thousand wants, which nothing but the confidence of friendship can supply, made her frequently regretted. She, therefore, solicited Imlac never to desist from inquiry, and to leave no art of intelligence untried, that, at least, she might have the comfort of knowing that she did not suffer by negligence or sluggishness. " Yet what," said she, " is to be expected from our pursuit of happiness, when we find the state of life to be such, that happiness itself is the cause of misery? Why should we endeavour to attain that, of which the possession cannot be secured? I shall henceforward fear to yield my heart to excellence, however bright, or to fondness, however tender, lest I should lose again what I have lost in Pekuah."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PRINCESS HEARS NEWS OF PEKUAH.

IN seven months, one of the messengers, who had been sent away upon the day when the promise was drawn from the princess, returned, after many unsuccessful rambles, from the borders of Nubia, with an account that Pekuah was in the hands of an Arab chief, who possessed a castle or fortress on the extremity of Egypt. The Arab, whose revenue was plunder, was willing to restore her, with her two attendants, for two hundred ounces of gold.

The price was no subject of debate. The princess was in ecstasies when she heard that her favourite was alive, and might so cheaply be ransomed. She could not think of delaying for a moment Pekuah's happiness or her own, but entreated her brother to send back the messenger with the sum required. Imlac being consulted, was not very confident of the veracity of the relator, and was still more doubtful of the Arab's faith, who might, if he were too liberally trusted, detain at once the money and the captives. He thought it dangerous to put themselves in the power of the Arab, by going into his district, and could not expect that the Rover would so much expose himself as to come into the lower country, where he might be seized by the forces of the Bassa.

It is difficult to negotiate where neither will trust. But Imlac, after some deliberation, directed the messenger to propose that Pekuah should be conducted by ten horsemen to the monastery of St. Antony, which is situated in the deserts of Upper Egypt, where she should be met by the same number, and her ransom should be paid.

That no time might be lost, as they expected that the proposal would not be refused, they immediately began their journey to the monastery; and, when they arrived, Imlac went forward with the former messenger to the Arab's fortress. Rasselas was desirous to go with them; but neither his sister nor Imlac would consent. The Arab, according to the custom of his nation, observed the laws of hospitality with great exactness to those who put themselves into his power, and, in a few days,

brought Pekuah with her maids, by easy journeys, to the place appointed, where receiving the stipulated price, he restored her with great respect to liberty and her friends, and undertook to conduct them back towards Cairo beyond all danger of robbery or violence.

The princess and her favourite embraced each other with transport too violent to be expressed, and went out together to pour the tears of tenderness in secret, and exchange professions of kindness and gratitude. After a few hours they returned into the refectory of the convent, where, in the presence of the prior and his brethren, the prince required of Pekuah the history of her adventures.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE LADY PEKUAH.

“ At what time, and in what manner I was forced away,” said Pekuah, “ your servants have told you. The suddenness of the event struck me with surprise, and I was at first rather stupefied than agitated with any passion of either fear or sorrow. My confusion was increased by the speed and tumult of our flight, while we were followed by the Turks, who, as it seemed, soon despaired to overtake us, or were afraid of those whom they made a show of menacing.

“ When the Arabs saw themselves out of danger they slackened their course, and as I was less harassed by external violence, I began to feel more uneasiness in my mind. After some time we

stopped near a spring shaded with trees in a pleasant meadow, where we were set upon the ground, and offered such refreshments as our masters were partaking. I was suffered to sit with my maids apart from the rest, and none attempted to comfort or insult us. Here I first began to feel the full weight of my misery. The girls sat weeping in silence, and from time to time looked on me for succour. I knew not to what condition we were doomed, nor could conjecture where would be the place of our captivity, or whence to draw any hope of deliverance. I was in the hands of robbers and savages, and had no reason to suppose that their pity was more than their justice, or that they would forbear the gratification of any ardour of desire, or caprice of cruelty. I, however, kissed my maids, and endeavoured to pacify them by remarking, that we were yet treated with decency, and that, since we were now carried beyond pursuit, there was no danger of violence to our lives.

“ When we were to be set again on horseback, my maids clung round me, and refused to be parted, but I commanded them not to irritate those who had us in their power. We travelled the remaining part of the day through an unfrequented and pathless country, and came by moonlight to the side of a hill, where the rest of the troop was stationed. Their tents were pitched, and their fires kindled, and our chief was welcomed as a man much beloved by his dependents.

“ We were received into a large tent, where we found women who had attended their husbands in the expedition. They set before us the supper

which they had provided, and I eat it rather to encourage my maids, than to comply with any appetite of my own. When the meat was taken away, they spread the carpets for repose. I was weary, and hoped to find in sleep that remission of distress which nature seldom denies. Ordering myself, therefore, to be undrest, I observed that the women looked very earnestly upon me, not expecting, I suppose, to see me so submissively attended. When my upper vest was taken off, they were apparently struck with the splendour of my clothes, and one of them timorously laid her hand upon the embroidery. She then went out, and, in a short time, came back with another woman, who seemed to be of higher rank, and greater authority. She did, at her entrance, the usual act of reverence, and taking me by the hand, placed me in a smaller tent, spread with finer carpets, where I spent the night quietly with my maids.

“ In the morning, as I was sitting on the grass, the chief of the troop came towards me. I rose up to receive him, and he bowed with great respect. ‘ Illustrious lady,’ said he, ‘ my fortune is better than I had presumed to hope; I am told by my women, that I have a princess in my camp.’ ‘ Sir,’ answered I, ‘ your women have deceived themselves and you; I am not a princess, but an unhappy stranger who intended soon to have left this country, in which I am now to be imprisoned for ever.’ ‘ Whoever, or whencesoever, you are,’ returned the Arab, ‘ your dress, and that of your servants, show your rank to be high, and your wealth to be great. Why should you who are so easily procure

your ransom, think yourself in danger of perpetual captivity? The purpose of my incursions is to increase my riches, or, more properly, to gather tribute. The sons of Ishmael are the natural and hereditary lords of this part of the continent, which is usurped by late invaders, and low-born tyrants, from whom we are compelled to take by the sword what is denied to justice. The violence of war admits no distinction; the lance that is lifted at guilt and power, will sometimes fall on innocence and gentleness.'

" ' How little,' said I, ' did I expect that yesterday it should have fallen upon me ! '

" ' Misfortunes,' answered the Arab, ' should always be expected. If the eye of hostility could learn reverence or pity, excellence like yours had been exempt from injury. But the angels of affliction spread their toils alike for the virtuous and the wicked, for the mighty and the mean. Do not be disconsolate: I am not one of the lawless and cruel rovers of the desert; I know the rules of civil life: I will fix your ransom, give a passport to your messenger, and perform my stipulation with nice punctuality.'

" You will easily believe that I was pleased with his courtesy: and finding that his predominant passion was desire of money, I began now to think my danger less, for I knew that no sum would be thought too great for the release of Pekuah. I told him, that he should have no reason to charge me with ingratitude, if I was used with kindness, and that any ransom which could be expected for a maid of common rank, would be paid; but that

he must not persist to rate me as a princess. He said, he would consider what he should demand, and then smiling, bowed and retired.

“ Soon after the women came about me, each contending to be more officious than the other, and my maids themselves were served with reverence. We travelled onward by short journeys. On the fourth day the chief told me, that my ransom must be two hundred ounces of gold ; which I not only promised him, but told him, that I would add fifty more, if I and my maids were honourably treated.

“ I never knew the power of gold before. From that time I was the leader of the troop. The march of every day was longer or shorter as I commanded, and the tents were pitched where I chose to rest. We now had camels and other conveniences for travel, my own women were always at my side, and I amused myself with observing the manners of the vagrant nations, and with viewing remains of ancient edifices, with which these deserted countries appear to have been, in some distant age, lavishly embellished.

“ The chief of the band was a man far from illiterate : he was able to travel by the stars or the compass, and had marked, in his erratic expeditions, such places as are most worthy the notice of a passenger. He observed to me, that buildings are always best preserved in places little frequented, and difficult of access : for, when once a country declines from its primitive splendour, the more inhabitants are left, the quicker ruin will be made. Walls supply stones more easily than quarries, and palaces and temples will be demolished, to make

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF PEKUAH CONTINUED.

“ WE wandered about in this manner for some weeks, whether, as our chief pretended, for my gratification, or, as I rather suspected, for some convenience of his own. I endeavoured to appear contented where sullenness and resentment would have been of no use, and that endeavour conduced much to the calmness of my mind ; but my heart was always with Nekayah, and the troubles of the night much overbalanced the amusements of the day. My women, who threw all their cares upon their mistress, set their minds at ease from the time when they saw me treated with respect, and gave themselves up to the incidental alleviations of our fatigue without solicitude or sorrow. I was pleased with their pleasure, and animated with their confidence. My condition had lost much of its terror, since I found that the Arab ranged the country merely to get riches. Avarice is an uniform and tractable vice : other intellectual distempers are different in different constitutions of mind ; that which soothes the pride of one will offend the pride of another ; but to the favour of the covetous there is a ready way ; bring money, and nothing is denied.

“ At last we came to the dwelling of our chief, a strong and spacious house built with stone in an island of the Nile, which lies, as I was told, under the tropick. ‘ Lady,’ said the Arab, ‘ you shall rest after your journey a few weeks in this place, where you are to consider yourself as sovereign.

My occupation is war: I have therefore chosen this obscure residence, from which I can issue unexpected, and to which I can retire unpursued. You may now repose in security: here are few pleasures, but here is no danger.' He then led me into the inner apartments, and seating me on the richest couch, bowed to the ground. His women, who considered me as a rival, looked on me with malignity; but being soon informed that I was a great lady detained only for my ransom, they began to vie with each other in obsequiousness and reverence.

" Being again comforted with new assurances of speedy liberty, I was for some days diverted from impatience by the novelty of the place. The turrets overlooked the country to a great distance, and afforded a view of many windings of the stream. In the day I wandered from one place to another, as the course of the sun varied the splendour of the prospect, and saw many things which I had never seen before. The crocodiles and river-horses are common in this unpeopled region, and I often looked upon them with terror, though I knew that they could not hurt me. For some time I expected to see mermaids and tritons, which, as Imlie has told me, the European travellers have stationed in the Nile, but no such beings ever appeared, and the Arab, when I inquired after them, laughed at my credulity.

" At night the Arab always attended me to a tower set apart for celestial observations, where he endeavoured to teach me the names and courses of the stars. I had no great inclination to this study, but an appearance of attention was necessary to

please my instructor, who valued himself for his skill ; and, in a little while, I found some employment requisite to beguile the tediousness of time, which was to be passed always amidst the same objects. I was weary of looking in the morning on things from which I had turned away weary in the evening : I therefore was at last willing to observe the stars rather than do nothing, but could not always compose my thoughts, and was very often thinking on Nekayah, when others imagined me contemplating the sky. Soon after the Arab went upon another expedition, and then my only pleasure was to talk with my maids about the accident by which we were carried away, and the happiness that we should all enjoy at the end of our captivity."

" There were women in your Arab's fortress," said the princess ; " why did you not make them your companions, enjoy their conversation, and partake their diversions ? In a place where they found business or amusement, why should you alone sit corroded with idle melancholy ? or why could not you bear, for a few months, that condition to which they were condemned for life ? "

" The diversions of the women," answered Pe-kuah, " were only childish play, by which the mind, accustomed to stronger operations, could not be kept busy. I could do all which they delighted in doing by powers merely sensitive, while my intellectual faculties were flown to Cairo. They ran from room to room as a bird hops from wire to wire in his cage. They danced for the sake of motion, as lambs frisk in a meadow. One sometimes pretended to be hurt, that the rest might be

alarmed; or hid herself, that another might seek her. Part of their time passed in watching the progress of light bodies that floated on the river, and part in marking the various forms into which clouds broke in the sky.

“ Their business was only needle-work, in which I and my maids sometimes helped them; but you know that the mind will easily straggle from the fingers, nor will you suspect that captivity and absence from Nekayah could receive solace from silken flowers.

“ Nor was much satisfaction to be hoped from their conversation: for of what could they be expected to talk? They had seen nothing; for they had lived from early youth in that narrow spot: of what they had not seen they could have no knowledge, for they could not read. They had no ideas but of the few things that were within their view, and had hardly names for any thing but their clothes and their food. As I bore a superior character, I was often called to terminate their quarrels, which I decided as equitably as I could. If it could have amused me to hear the complaints of each against the rest, I might have been often detained by long stories; but the motives of their animosity were so small that I could not listen without intercepting the tale.”

“ How,” said Rasselas, “ can the Arab, whom you represented as a man of more than common accomplishments, take any pleasure in his seraglio when it is filled only with women like these? Are they exquisitely beautiful?”

“ They do not,” said Pekuah, “ want that un-affecting and ignoble beauty which may subsist without sprightliness or sublimity, without energy of thought or dignity of virtue. But to a man like the Arab such beauty was only a flower casually plucked and carelessly thrown away. Whatever pleasures he might find among them, they were not those of friendship or society. When they were playing about him he looked on them with inattentive superiority: when they vied for his regard, he sometimes turned away disgusted. As they had no knowledge, their talk could take nothing from the tediousness of life: as they had no choice, their fondness, or appearance of fondness, excited in him neither pride nor gratitude; he was not exalted in his own esteem by the smiles of a woman who saw no other man, nor was much obliged by that regard, of which he could never know the sincerity, and which he might often perceive to be exerted, not so much to delight him as to pain a rival. That which he gave, and they received, as love, was only a careless distribution of superfluous time, such love as man can bestow upon that which he despises, such as has neither hope nor fear, neither joy nor sorrow.”

“ You have reason, lady, to think yourself happy,” said Imlac, “ that you have been thus easily dismissed. How could a mind, hungry for knowledge, be willing, in an intellectual famine, to lose such a banquet as Pekuah’s conversation?”

“ I am inclined to believe,” answered Pekuah, “ that he was for some time in suspense; for, notwith-

standing his promise, whenever I proposed to despatch a messenger to Cairo, he found some excuse for delay. While I was detained in his house he made many incursions into the neighbouring countries, and, perhaps, he would have refused to discharge me, had his plunder been equal to his wishes. He returned always courteous, related his adventures, delighted to hear my observations, and endeavoured to advance my acquaintance with the stars. When I importuned him to send away my letters, he soothed me with professions of honour and sincerity ; and when I could be no longer decently denied, put his troop again in motion, and left me to govern in his absence. I was much afflicted by this studied procrastination, and was sometimes afraid that I should be forgotten ; that you would leave Cairo, and I must end my days in an island of the Nile.

“ I grew at last hopeless and dejected, and cared so little to entertain him, that he for a while more frequently talked with my maids. That he should fall in love with them, or with me, might have been equally fatal, and I was not much pleased with the growing friendship. My anxiety was not long ; for, as I recovered some degree of cheerfulness, he returned to me, and I could not forbear to despise my former uneasiness.

“ He still delayed to send for my ransom, and would, perhaps, never have determined, had not your agent found his way to him. The gold, which he would not fetch, he could not reject when it was offered. He hastened to prepare for our journey hither, like a man delivered from the pain of

an intestine conflict. I took leave of my companions in the house, who dismissed me with cold indifference.”

Nekayah having heard her favourite’s relation, rose and embraced her, and Rasselas gave her an hundred ounces of gold, which she presented to the Arab for the fifty that were promised.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE HISTORY OF A MAN OF LEARNING.

THEY returned to Cairo, and were so well pleased at finding themselves together, that none of them went much abroad. The prince began to love learning, and one day declared to Imlac, that he intended to devote himself to science, and pass the rest of his days in literary solitude.

“ Before you make your final choice,” answered Imlac, “ you ought to examine its hazards, and converse with some of those who are grown old in the company of themselves. I have just left the observatory of one of the most learned astronomers in the world, who has spent forty years in unwearyed attention to the motions and appearances of the celestial bodies, and has drawn out his soul in endless calculations. He admits a few friends once a month to hear his deductions and enjoy his discoveries. I was introduced as a man of knowledge worthy of his notice. Men of various ideas, and fluent conversation, are commonly welcome to those whose thoughts have been long fixed upon a single point, and who find the images of other things stealing away. I delighted him with my remarks ; he

smiled at the narrative of my travels, and was glad to forget the constellations, and descend for a moment into the lower world.

“ On the next day of vacation I renewed my visit, and was so fortunate as to please him again. He relaxed from that time the severity of his rule, and permitted me to enter at my own choice. I found him always busy, and always glad to be relieved. As each knew much which the other was desirous of learning, we exchanged our notions with great delight. I perceived that I had every day more of his confidence, and always found new cause of admiration in the profundity of his mind. His comprehension is vast, his memory capacious and retentive, his discourse is methodical, and his expression clear.

“ His integrity and benevolence are equal to his learning. His deepest researches and most favourite studies are willingly interrupted for any opportunity of doing good by his counsel or his riches. To his closest retreat, at his most busy moments, all are admitted that want his assistance: ‘ For though I exclude idleness and pleasure, I will never,’ says he, ‘ bar my doors against charity. To man is permitted the contemplation of the skies, but the practice of virtue is commanded.’ ”

“ Surely,” said the princess, “ this man is happy.”

“ I visited him,” said Imlac, “ with more and more frequency, and was every time more enamoured of his conversation: he was sublime without haughtiness, courteous without formality, and communicative without ostentation. I was at first, great princess, of your opinion, thought him the happiest

of mankind, and often congratulated him on the blessing that he enjoyed. He seemed to hear nothing with indifference but the praises of his condition, to which he always returned a general answer, and diverted the conversation to some other topick.

“ Amidst this willingness to be pleased, and labour to please, I had quickly reason to imagine that some painful sentiment pressed upon his mind. He often looked up earnestly towards the sun, and let his voice fall in the midst of his discourse. He would sometimes, when we were alone, gaze upon me in silence with the air of a man who longed to speak what he was yet resolved to suppress. He would often send for me with vehement injunctions of haste, though, when I came to him, he had nothing extraordinary to say. And sometimes, when I was leaving him, would call me back, pause a few moments, and then dismiss me.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ASTRONOMER DISCOVERS THE CAUSE OF HIS UNEASINESS.

“ At last the time came when the secret burst his reserve. We were sitting together last night in the turret of his house, watching the emersion of a satellite of Jupiter. A sudden tempest clouded the sky, and disappointed our observation. We sat a while silent in the dark, and then he addressed himself to me in these words : ‘ Imlac, I have long considered thy friendship as the greatest blessing of my life. Integrity without knowledge is weak and

useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful. I have found in thee all the qualities requisite for trust, benevolence, experience, and fortitude. I have long discharged an office which I must soon quit at the call of nature, and shall rejoice in the hour of imbecility and pain to devolve it upon thee.'

"I thought myself honoured by this testimony, and protested, that whatever could conduce to his happiness would add likewise to mine.

"'Hear Imlac, what thou wilt not without difficulty credit. I have possessed for five years the regulation of weather, and the distribution of the seasons: the sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropick to tropick by my direction; the clouds, at my call, have poured their waters, and the Nile has overflowed at my command; I have restrained the rage of the dog-star, and mitigated the servours of the crab. The winds alone, of all the elemental powers, have hitherto refused my authority, and multitudes have perished by equinoctial tempests, which I found myself unable to prohibit or restrain. I have administered this great office with exact justice, and made to the different nations of the earth an impartial dividend of rain and sunshine. What must have been the misery of half the globe, if I had limited the clouds to particular regions, or confined the sun to either side of the equator!'

CHAPTER XLI.

THE OPINION OF THE ASTRONOMER IS EXPLAINED
AND JUSTIFIED.

“ I suppose he discovered in me, through the obscurity of the room, some tokens of amazement and doubt, for, after a short pause, he proceeded thus :

“ ‘ Not to be easily credited will neither surprise nor offend me ; for I am, probably, the first of human beings to whom this trust has been imparted. Nor do I know whether to deem this distinction a reward or punishment ; since I have possessed it I have been far less happy than before, and nothing but the consciousness of good intention could have enabled me to support the weariness of unremitting vigilance.’

“ ‘ How long, sir,’ said I, ‘ has this great office been in your hands?’

“ ‘ About ten years ago,’ said he, ‘ my daily observations of the changes of the sky led me to consider, whether, if I had the power of the seasons, I could confer greater plenty upon the inhabitants of the earth. This contemplation fastened on my mind, and I sat days and nights in imaginary dominion, pouring upon this country and that the showers of fertility, and seconding every fall of rain with a due proportion of sunshine. I had yet only the will to do good, and did not imagine that I should ever have the power.

“ ‘ One day, as I was looking on the fields withering with heat, I felt in my mind a sudden wish that I could send rain on the southern mountains,

and raise the Nile to an inundation. In the hurry of my imagination I commanded rain to fall, and by comparing the time of my command with that of the inundation, I found that the clouds had listened to my lips.'

" 'Might not some other cause,' said I, 'produce this concurrence? the Nile does not always rise on the same day.'

" 'Do not believe,' said he, with impatience, 'that such objections could escape me: I reasoned long against my own conviction, and laboured against truth with the utmost obstinacy. I sometimes suspected myself of madness, and should not have dared to impart this secret but to a man like you, capable of distinguishing the wonderful from the impossible, and the incredible from the false.'

" 'Why, sir,' said I, 'do you call that incredible, which you know, or think you know, to be true?'

" 'Because,' said he, 'I cannot prove it by any external evidence; and I know too well the laws of demonstration to think that my conviction ought to influence another, who cannot, like me, be conscious of its force. I, therefore, shall not attempt to gain credit by disputation. It is sufficient that I feel this power, that I have long possessed, and every day exerted it. But the life of man is short, the infirmities of age increase upon me, and the time will soon come, when the regulator of the year must mingle with the dust. The care of appointing a successor has long disturbed me; the night and the day have been spent in comparisons of all the characters which have come to my knowledge, and I have yet found none so worthy as thyself.'

CHAPTER XLII.

THE ASTRONOMER LEAVES IMLAC HIS DIRECTIONS.

“ ‘ HEAR, therefore, what I shall impart with attention, such as the welfare of a world requires. If the task of a king be considered as difficult, who has the care, only of a few millions, to whom he cannot do much good or harm, what must be the anxiety of him, on whom depends the action of the elements, and the great gifts of light and heat!

—Hear me therefore with attention.

“ ‘ I have diligently considered the position of the earth and sun, and formed innumerable schemes in which I changed their situation. I have sometimes turned aside the axis of the earth, and sometimes varied the ecliptick of the sun : but I have found it impossible to make a disposition by which the world may be advantaged ; what one region gains, another loses by an imaginable alteration, even without considering the distant parts of the solar system with which we are unacquainted. Do not, therefore, in thy administration of the year, indulge thy pride by innovation ; do not please thyself with thinking that thou canst make thyself renowned to all future ages, by disordering the seasons. The memory of mischief is no desirable fame. Much less will it become thee to let kindness or interest prevail. Never rob other countries of rain to pour it on thine own. For us the Nile is sufficient.’

“ I promised, that when I possessed the power, I would use it with inflexible integrity ; and he dis-

missed me, pressing my hand. ‘ My heart,’ said he, ‘ will be now at rest, and my benevolence will no more destroy my quiet; I have found a man of wisdom and virtue, to whom I can cheerfully bequeath the inheritance of the sun.’ ”

The prince heard this narration with very serious regard; but the princess smiled, and Pekuah convulsed herself with laughter. “ Ladies,” said Imlac, “ to mock the heaviest of human afflictions is neither charitable nor wise. Few can attain this man’s knowledge, and few practise his virtues; but all may suffer his calamity. Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason.”

The princess was recollected and the favourite was abashed. Rasselas, more deeply affected, inquired of Imlac, whether he thought such maladies of the mind frequent, and how they were contracted?

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DANGEROUS PREVALENCE OF IMAGINATION.

“ DISORDERS of intellect,” answered Imlac, “ happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe. Perhaps, if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. There is no man whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannize, and force him to hope

or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity ; but while this power is such as we can control and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties : it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action.

“ To indulge the power of fiction, and send imagination out upon the wing, is often the sport of those who delight too much in silent speculation. When we are alone we are not always busy ; the labour of excogitation is too violent to last long ; the ardour of inquiry will sometimes give way to idleness or satiety. He who has nothing external that can divert him must find pleasure in his own thoughts, and must conceive himself what he is not ; for who is pleased with what he is ? He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. The mind dances from scene to scene, unites all pleasures in all combinations, and riots in delights, which nature and fortune, with all their bounty, cannot bestow.

“ In time, some particular train of ideas fixes the attention, all other intellectual gratifications are rejected, the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood, whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees the reign of fancy is confirmed ; she grows first

imperious, and in time despotick. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish.

“ This, sir, is one of the dangers of solitude, which the hermit has confessed not always to promote goodness, and the astronomer’s misery has proved to be not always propitious to wisdom.”

“ I will no more,” said the favourite, “ imagine myself the queen of Abissinia. I have often spent the hours which the princess gave to my own disposal, in adjusting ceremonies and regulating the court; I have repressed the pride of the powerful, and granted the petitions of the poor; I have built new palaces in more happy situations, planted groves upon the tops of mountains, and have exulted in the beneficence of royalty, till, when the princess entered, I had almost forgotten to bow down before her.”

“ And I,” said the princess, “ will not allow myself any more to play the shepherdess in my waking dreams. I have often soothed my thoughts with the quiet and innocence of pastoral employments, till I have in my chamber heard the winds whistle and the sheep bleat: sometimes freed the lamb entangled in the thicket, and sometimes with my crook encountered the wolf. I have a dress like that of the village maids, which I put on to help my imagination, and a pipe on which I play softly, and suppose myself followed by my flocks.”

“ I will confess,” said the prince, “ an indulgence of fantastick delight more dangerous than yours. I have frequently endeavoured to image the pos-

sibility of a perfect government, by which all wrong should be restrained, all vice reformed, and all the subjects preserved in tranquillity and innocence. This thought produced innumerable schemes of reformation, and dictated many useful regulations and salutary edicts. This has been the sport, and sometimes the labour, of my solitude; and I start, when I think with how little anguish I once supposed the death of my father and my brothers."

"Such," says Imlac, "are the effects of visionary schemes: when we first form them we know them to be absurd, but familiarize them by degrees, and in time lose sight of their folly."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THEY DISCOURSE WITH AN OLD MAN.

THE evening was now far past, and they rose to return home. As they walked along the bank of the Nile, delighted with the beams of the moon quivering on the water, they saw at a small distance an old man, whom the prince had often heard in the assembly of the sages. "Yonder," said he, "is one whose years have calmed his passions, but not clouded his reason: let us close the disquisitions of the night, by inquiring what are his sentiments of his own state, that we may know whether youth alone is to struggle with vexation, and whether any better hope remains for the latter part of life."

Here the sage approached and saluted them. They invited him to join their walk, and prattled a while, as acquaintance that had unexpectedly met

one another. The old man was cheerful and talkative, and the way seemed short in his company. He was pleased to find himself not disregarded, accompanied them to their house, and, at the prince's request, entered with them. They placed him in the seat of honour, and set wine and conserves before him.

“Sir,” said the princess, “an evening walk must give to a man of learning, like you, pleasures which ignorance and youth can hardly conceive. You know the qualities and the causes of all that you behold, the laws by which the river flows, the periods in which the planets perform their revolutions. Every thing must supply you with contemplation, and renew the consciousness of your own dignity.”

“Lady,” answered he, “let the gay and the vigorous expect pleasure in their excursions; it is enough that age can obtain ease. To me the world has lost its novelty: I look round, and see what I remember to have seen in happier days. I rest against a tree, and consider, that in the same shade I once disputed upon the annual overflow of the Nile with a friend who is now silent in the grave. I cast my eyes upwards, fix them on the changing moon, and think with pain on the vicissitudes of life. I have ceased to take much delight in physical truth; for what have I to do with those things which I am soon to leave?”

“You may at least recreate yourself,” said Imlac, “with the recollection of an honourable and useful life, and enjoy the praise which all agree to give you.”

“Praise,” said the sage, with a sigh, “is to an old man an empty sound. I have neither mother to be delighted with the reputation of her son, nor wife to partake the honours of her husband. I have outlived my friends and my rivals. Nothing is now of much importance; for I cannot extend my interest beyond myself. Youth is delighted with applause, because it is considered as the earnest of some future good, and because the prospect of life is far extended: but to me, who am now declining to decrepitude, there is little to be feared from the malevolence of men, and yet less to be hoped from their affection or esteem. Something they may yet take away, but they can give me nothing. Riches would now be useless, and high employment would be pain. My retrospect of life recalls to my view many opportunities of good neglected, much time squandered upon trifles, and more lost in idleness and vacancy. I leave many great designs unattempted, and many great attempts unfinished. My mind is burdened with no heavy crime, and therefore I compose myself to tranquillity; endeavour to abstract my thoughts from hopes and cares, which, though reason knows them to be vain, still try to keep their old possession of the heart; expect, with serene humility, that hour which nature cannot long delay; and hope to possess, in a better state, that happiness which here I could not find, and that virtue which here I have not attained.”

He rose and went away, leaving his audience not much elated with the hope of long life. The prince consoled himself with remarking, that it was

not reasonable to be disappointed by this account ; for age had never been considered as the season of felicity, and if it was possible to be easy in decline and weakness, it was likely that the days of vigour and alacrity might be happy : that the noon of life might be bright, if the evening could be calm.

The princess suspected that age was querulous and malignant, and delighted to repress the expectations of those who had newly entered the world. She had seen the possessors of estates look with envy on their heirs, and known many who enjoyed pleasure no longer than they can confine it to themselves.

Pekuah conjectured that the man was older than he appeared, and was willing to impute his complaints to delirious dejection : or else supposed that he had been unfortunate, and was therefore discontented : " For nothing," said she, " is more common, than to call our own condition the condition of life."

Imlac, who had no desire to see them depressed, smiled at the comforts which they could so readily procure to themselves, and remembered, that at the same age, he was equally confident of unmixed prosperity, and equally fertile of consolatory expedients. He forbore to force upon them unwelcome knowledge, which time itself would too soon impress. The princess and her lady retired ; the madness of the astronomer hung upon their minds, and they desired Imlac to enter upon his office, and delay next morning the rising of the sun.

sented to admit her, he could not stay without impatience till the next day.

The ladies dressed themselves magnificently, and were attended by Imlac to the astronomer, who was pleased to see himself approached with respect by persons of so splendid an appearance. In the exchange of the first civilities he was timorous and bashful ; but when the talk became regular, he recollects his powers, and justified the character which Imlac had given. Inquiring of Pekuah, what could have turned her inclination towards astronomy ? he received from her a history of her adventure at the pyramid, and of the time passed in the Arab's island. She told her tale with ease and elegance, and her conversation took possession of his heart. The discourse was then turned to astronomy : Pekuah displayed what she knew : he looked upon her as a prodigy of genius, and entreated her not to desist from a study which she had so happily begun.

They came again and again, and were every time more welcome than before. The sage endeavoured to amuse them, that they might prolong their visits, for he found his thoughts grow brighter in their company ; the clouds of solicitude vanished by degrees, as he forced himself to entertain them, and he grieved when he was left at their departure to his old employment of regulating the seasons.

The princess and her favourite had now watched his lips for several months, and could not catch a single word from which they could judge whether he continued, or not, in the opinion of his preternatural commission. They often contrived to bring

him to an open declaration ; but he easily eluded all their attacks, and on which side soever they pressed him, escaped from them to some other topick.

As their familiarity increased, they invited him often to the house of Imlae, where they distinguished him by extraordinary respect. He began gradually to delight in sublunary pleasures. He came early, and departed late ; laboured to recommend himself by assiduity and compliance ; excited their curiosity after new arts, that they might still want his assistance ; and when they made any excursion of pleasure or inquiry, entreated to attend them.

By long experience of his integrity and wisdom, the prince and his sister were convinced that he might be trusted without danger ; and lest he should draw any false hopes from the civilities which he received, discovered to him their condition, with the motives of their journey ; and required his opinion on the choice of life.

“ Of the various conditions which the world spreads before you, which you shall prefer,” said the sage, “ I am not able to instruct you. I can only tell that I have chosen wrong. I have passed my time in study without experience ; in the attainment of sciences which can, for the most part, be but remotely useful to mankind. I have purchased knowledge at the expense of all the common comforts of life : I have missed the endearing elegance of female friendship, and the happy commerce of domestick tenderness. If I have obtained any prerogatives above other students, they have been accompanied with fear, vexation, and trouble.”

but even of these prerogatives, whatever they were, I have, since my thoughts have been diversified by more intercourse with the world, begun to question the reality. When I have been for a few days lost in pleasing dissipation, I am always tempted to think that my inquiries have ended in error, and that I have suffered much, and suffered it in vain."

Imlac was delighted to find that the sage's understanding was breaking through its mists, and resolved to detain him from the planets till he should forget his task of ruling them, and reason should recover its original influence.

From this time the astronomer was received into familiar friendship, and partook of all their projects and pleasures: his respect kept him attentive, and the activity of Rasselas did not leave much time unengaged. Something was always to be done; the day was spent in making observations which furnished talk for the evening, and the evening was closed with a scheme for the morrow.

The sage confessed to Imlac, that since he had mingled in the gay tumults of life, and divided his hours by a succession of amusements, he found the conviction of his authority over the skies fade gradually from his mind, and began to trust less to an opinion which he never could prove to others, and which he now found subject to variation, from causes in which reason had no part. "If I am accidentally left alone for a few hours," said he, "my inveterate persuasion rushes upon my soul, and my thoughts are chained down by some irresistible violence; but they are soon disentangled by the

prince's conversation, and instantaneously released at the entrance of Pekuah. I am like a man habitually afraid of spectres, who is set at ease by a lamp, and wonders at the dread which harassed him in the dark ; yet, if his lamp be extinguished, feels again the terrors which he knows that when it is light he shall feel no more. But I am sometimes afraid lest I indulge my quiet by criminal negligence, and voluntarily forget the great charge with which I am intrusted. If I favour myself in a known error, or am determined by my own ease in a doubtful question of this importance, how dreadful is my crime !"

" No disease of the imagination," answered Imlac, " is so difficult of cure, as that which is complicated with the dread of guilt : fancy and conscience then act interchangeably upon us, and so often shift their places, that the illusions of one are not distinguished from the dictates of the other. If fancy presents images not moral or religious, the mind drives them away when they give it pain ; but when melancholic notions take the form of duty, they lay hold on the faculties without opposition, because we are afraid to exclude or banish them. For this reason the superstitious are often melancholy, and the melancholy almost always superstitious.

" But do not let the suggestions of timidity overpower your better reason : the danger of neglect can be but as the probability of the obligation, which when you consider it with freedom, you find very little, and that little growing every day less. Open your heart to the influence of the

light, which from time to time breaks in upon you: when scruples importune you, which you in your lucid moments know to be vain, do not stand to parley, but fly to business or to Pekuah, and keep this thought always prevalent, that you are only one atom of the mass of humanity, and have neither such virtue nor vice, as that you should be singled out for supernatural favours or afflictions.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE PRINCE ENTERS, AND BRINGS A NEW TOPICK.

“ ALL this,” said the astronomer, “ I have often thought, but my reason has been so long subjugated by an uncontrollable and overwhelming idea, that it durst not confide in its own decisions. I now see how fatally I betrayed my quiet, by suffering chimeras to prey upon me in secret; but melancholy shrinks from communication, and I never found a man before to whom I could impart my troubles, though I had been certain of relief. I rejoice to find my own sentiments confirmed by yours, who are not easily deceived, and can have no motive or purpose to deceive. I hope that time and variety will dissipate the gloom that has so long surrounded me, and the latter part of my days will be spent in peace.”

“ Your learning and virtue,” said Imlac, “ may justly give you hopes.”

Rasselas then entered with the princess and Pekuah, and inquired, whether they had contrived any new diversion for the next day? “ Such,” said Ne-

kayah, is the state of life, that none are happy but by the anticipation of change : the change itself is nothing ; when we have made it, the next wish is to change again. The world is not yet exhausted ; let me see something to-morrow which I never saw before."

" Variety," said Rasselas, " is so necessary to content, that even the happy valley disgusted me by the recurrence of its luxuries ; yet I could not forbear to reproach myself with impatience, when I saw the monks of St. Anthony support, without complaint, a life, not of uniform delight, but uniform hardship."

" Those men," answered Imlac, " are less wretched in their silent convent than the Abissinian princes in their prison of pleasure. Whatever is done by the monks is incited by an adequate and reasonable motive. Their labour supplies them with necessaries ; it therefore cannot be omitted, and is certainly rewarded. Their devotion prepares them for another state, and reminds them of its approach, while it fits them for it. Their time is regularly distributed ; one duty succeeds another, so that they are not left open to the distraction of unguided choice, nor lost in the shades of listless inactivity. There is a cerin task to be performed at an appropriated hour ; and their toils are cheerful, because they consider them as acts of piety, by which they are always advancing towards endless felicity."

" Do you think," said Nekayah, " that the monastick rule is a more holy and less imperfect state than any other ? May not he equally hope for

future happiness who converses openly with mankind, who succours the distressed by his charity, instructs the ignorant by his learning, and contributes by his industry to the general system of life ; even though he should omit some of the mortifications which are practised in the cloister, and allow himself such harmless delights as his condition may place within his reach ?”

“ This,” said Imlac, “ is a question which has long divided the wise, and perplexed the good. I am afraid to decide on either part. He that lives well in the world is better than he that lives well in a monastery. But, perhaps, every one is not able to stem the temptations of publick life ; and if he cannot conquer, he may properly retreat. Some have little power to do good, and have likewise little strength to resist evil. Many are weary of their conflicts with adversity, and are willing to eject those passions which have long busied them in vain. And many are dismissed by age and diseases from the more laborious duties of society. In monasteries the weak and timorous may be happily sheltered, the weary may repose, and the penitent may meditate. Those retreats of prayer and contemplation have something so congenial to the mind of man, that, perhaps, there is scarcely one that does not propose to close his life in pious abstraction with a few associates serious as himself.”

“ Such,” said Pekuah, “ has often been my wish, and I have heard the princess declare, that she should not willingly die in a crowd.”

“ The liberty of using harmless pleasures,” proceeded Imlac, “ will not be disputed ; but it is still to

be examined what pleasures are harmless. The evil of any pleasure that Nekayah can image is not in the act itself, but in its consequences. Pleasure, in itself harmless, may become mischievous, by endearing to us a state which we know to be transient and probatory, and withdrawing our thoughts from that, of which every hour brings us nearer to the beginning, and of which no length of time will bring us to the end. Mortification is not virtuous in itself, nor has any other use, but that it disengages us from the allurements of sense. In the state of future perfection, to which we all aspire, there will be pleasure without danger, and security without restraint."

The princess was silent, and Rasselas, turning to the astronomer, asked him, whether he could not delay her retreat, by showing her something which she had not seen before.

“Your curiosity,” said the sage, “has been so general, and your pursuit of knowledge so vigorous, that novelties are not now very easily to be found: but what you can no longer procure from the living may be given by the dead. Among the wonders of this country are the catacombs, or the ancient repositories, in which the bodies of the earliest generations were lodged, and where, by the virtue of the gums which embalmed them, they yet remain without corruption.”

“I know not,” said Rasselas, “what pleasure the sight of the catacombs can afford; but, since nothing else offered, I am resolved to view them, and shall place this with many other things which I have done, because I would do something.”

They hired a guard of horsemen, and the next day visited the catacombs. When they were about to descend into the sepulchral caves, "Pekuah," said the princess, "we are now again invading the habitations of the dead; I know that you will stay behind; let me find you safe when I return." "No, I will not be left," answered Pekuah; "I will go down between you and the prince."

They then all descended, and roved with wonder through the labyrinth of subterraneous passages, where the bodies were laid in rows on either side.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IMLAC DISCOURSES ON THE NATURE OF THE SOUL.

"WHAT reason," said the prince, "can be given, why the Egyptians should thus expensively preserve those carcases which some nations consume with fire, others lay to mingle with the earth, and all agree to remove from their sight, as soon as decent rites can be performed?"

"The original of ancient customs," said Imlac, "is commonly unknown; for the practice often continues when the cause has ceased; and concerning superstitious ceremonies it is vain to conjecture; for what reason did not dictate, reason cannot explain. I have long believed that the practice of embalming arose only from tenderness to the remains of relations or friends, and to this opinion I am more inclined, because it seems impossible that this care should have been general:

had all the dead been embalmed, their repositories must in time have been more spacious than the dwellings of the living. I suppose only the rich or honourable were secured from corruption, and the rest left to the course of nature.

“ But it is commonly supposed that the Egyptians believed the soul to live as long as the body continued undissolved, and therefore tried this method of eluding death.”

“ Could the wise Egyptians,” said Nekayah, “ think so grossly of the soul? If the soul could once survive its separation, what could it afterwards receive or suffer from the body?”

“ The Egyptians would doubtless think erroneously,” said the astronomer, “ in the darkness of heathenism, and the first dawn of philosophy. The nature of the soul is still disputed amidst all our opportunities of clearer knowledge: some yet say, that it may be material, who, nevertheless, believe it to be immortal.”

“ Some,” answered Imlac, “ have indeed said that the soul is material, but I can scarcely believe that any man has thought it, who knew how to think; for all the conclusions of reason enforce the immateriality of mind, and all the notices of sense and investigations of science concur to prove the unconsciousness of matter.

“ It was never supposed that cogitation is inherent in matter, or that every particle is a thinking being. Yet, if any part of matter be devoid of thought, what part can we suppose to think? Matter can differ from matter only in form, density, bulk, motion, and direction of motion: to which

of these, however varied or combined, can consciousness be annexed? To be round or square, to be solid or fluid, to be great or little, to be moved slowly or swiftly one way or another, are modes of material existence, all equally alien from the nature of cogitation. If matter be once without thought, it can only be made to think by some new modification, but all the modifications which it can admit are equally unconnected with cogitative powers."

"But the materialists," said the astronomer, "urge that matter may have qualities with which we are unacquainted."

"He who will determine," returned Imlac, "against that which he knows, because there may be something which he knows not; he that can set hypothetical possibility against acknowledged certainty, is not to be admitted among reasonable beings. All that we know of matter is, that matter is inert, senseless, and lifeless; and if this conviction cannot be opposed but by referring us to something that we know not, we have all the evidence that human intellect can admit. If that which is known may be overruled by that which is unknown, no being, not omniscient, can arrive at certainty."

"Yet let us not," said the astronomer, "too arrogantly limit the Creator's power."

"It is no limitation of Omnipotence," replied the poet, "to suppose that one thing is not consistent with another, that the same proposition cannot be at once true and false, that the same number cannot be even and odd, that cogitation cannot be conferred on that which is created incapable of cogitation."

“ I know not,” said Nekayah, “ any great use of this question. Does that immateriality, which, in my opinion, you have sufficiently proved, necessarily include eternal duration ?”

“ Of immateriality,” said Imlac, “ our ideas are negative, and therefore obscure. Immateriality seems to imply a natural power of perpetual duration as a consequence of exemption from all causes of decay: whatever perishes is destroyed by the solution of its contexture, and separation of its parts; nor can we conceive how that which has no parts, and therefore admits no solution, can be naturally corrupted or impaired.”

“ I know not,” said Rasselas, “ how to conceive any thing without extension; what is extended must have parts, and you allow, that whatever has parts may be destroyed.”

“ Consider your own conceptions,” replied Imlac, “ and the difficulty will be less. You will find substance without extension. An ideal form is no less real than material bulk: yet an ideal form has no extension. It is no less certain, when you think on a pyramid, that your mind possesses the idea of a pyramid, than that the pyramid itself is standing. What space does the idea of a pyramid occupy more than the idea of a grain of corn? or how can either idea suffer laceration? As is the effect, such is the cause: as thought, such is the power that thinks; a power impassive and indiscernible.”

“ But the Being,” said Nekayah, “ whom I fear to name, the Being which made the soul, can destroy it.”

“ He, surely, can destroy it,” answered Imlac, “ since, however unperishable, it receives from a superior nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any inherent cause of decay, or principle of corruption, may be shown by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not be annihilated by him that made it, we must humbly learn from higher authority.”

The whole assembly stood awhile silent and collected. “ Let us return,” said Rasselas, “ from this scene of mortality. How gloomy would be these mansions of the dead to him who did not know that he should never die; that what now acts shall continue its agency, and what now thinks shall think on for ever. Those that lie here stretched before us, the wise and the powerful of ancient times, warn us to remember the shortness of our present state: they were, perhaps, snatched away while they were busy like us in the choice of life.”

“ To me,” said the princess, “ the choice of life is become less important; I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity.”

They then hastened out of the caverns, and, under the protection of their guard, returned to Cairo.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CONCLUSION, IN WHICH NOTHING IS CONCLUDED.

IT was now the time of the inundation of the Nile: a few days after their visit to the catacombs, the river began to rise.

They were confined to their house. The whole region being under water gave them no invitation to any excursions, and, being well supplied with materials for talk, they diverted themselves with comparisons of the different forms of life which they had observed, and with various schemes of happiness, which each of them had formed.

Pekuah was never so much charmed with any place as the convent of St. Anthony, where the Arab restored her to the princess, and wished only to fill it with pious maidens, and to be made prioress of the order: she was weary of expectation and disgust, and would gladly be fixed in some unvariable state.

The princess thought, that of all sublunary things knowledge was the best: she desired first to learn all sciences, and then purposed to found a college of learned women, in which she would preside, that, by conversing with the old, and educating the young, she might divide her time between the acquisition and communication of wisdom, and raise up for the next age models of prudence, and patterns of piety.

The prince desired a little kingdom, in which he might administer justice in his own person, and

see all the parts of government with his own eyes; but he could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects.

Imlac and the astronomer were contented to be driven along the stream of life, without directing their course to any particular port.

Of these wishes that they had formed they well knew that none could be obtained. They deliberated awhile what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abissinia.

END OF VOL. III.

